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PACIFIC UNITARIAN SCHOOL
FOR THE MINISTRY
Berkeley, California

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

OF THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF

Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian,

AND OTHER

Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations.

REPORT

OF

CONFERENCE HELD AT BIRMINGHAM,

APRIL, 1885.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

WILLIAMS & NORGATE, 14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN,
LONDON ; AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

CORNISH BROTHERS, NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

H. RAWSON & CO., 16, NEW BROWN STREET, MANCHESTER.

1885.

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INTRODUCTION.

At the close of the First Conference held in Liverpool in April, 1882, it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. S. S. Tayler, Treasurer, and the Rev. H. Ierson, M.A., Secretary, of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association :—

“That the Committee and Secretaries of the present Conference, with power to add to their number, be appointed a standing Committee, with instructions to call a similar Conference at such period as it may deem advisable.”

This Committee consisted of

Mr. D. AINSWORTH, M.P., <i>Chairman</i> ;	Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON,	} <i>Hon.</i> <i>Secs.</i>
Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.,	Mr. HERBERT NEW,	
Rev. C. BEARD, B.A.,	Rev. H. W. CROSSKEY, LL.D.	
Mr. T. CHATFIELD CLARKE, <i>Treasurer</i> ;	Mr. HARRY RAWSON,	
Rev. P. W. CLAYDEN,	Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL,	
Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS,	Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON, B.A.	
Mr. C. H. JAMES, M.P.,	<i>Acting Secretary.</i>	

This Committee wrote a letter to the American Unitarian Association, expressing its pleasure at the renewed proof given by the words of its representatives at Liverpool as to the identity of thought and sentiment uniting the hearts of Liberal Churches on both sides of the Atlantic, and communicating the resolution of sympathy passed by the Conference in the losses sustained by the Liberal Churches of the United States from the death of Henry W. Longfellow, of Dr. Dewey and Dr. Bellows. The letter was duly acknowledged by the Secretary, the Rev. G. Reynolds, who added an invitation, with promise of a warm greeting, to repre-

sentatives at the autumnal Conference in America. Dr. W. B. Carpenter, the Rev. J. Page Hopps, and the Rev. A. Chalmers were appointed to represent the Committee at the Saratoga Conference, but Dr. Carpenter alone attended at Saratoga.

The Liverpool Conference resolved that it was desirable to establish a Sustentation Fund for the augmentation of the stipends of Ministers, and referred the subject to the Conference Committee. This proved to be a matter requiring careful and prolonged attention. A scheme was prepared by the Committee; the advice of friends was taken upon it; and, after due deliberation, it was issued with an appeal for subscriptions. The result has been, on the whole, satisfactory. The subscribers met on 25th April, 1883, and appointed a Board of Management. The Sustentation Fund is now an established and important addition to the Funds for assisting the Ministry of the Free Churches. A Report as to its constitution and proceedings was read at the Birmingham Conference by Mr. Harry Rawson, and is printed at page 111 of the Proceedings.

As time passed on, it appeared desirable that a Second Conference should be called at the end of three years; and the Committee accepted an invitation from the Free Churches in Birmingham. These churches would have preferred the postponement of the Conference till 1886, in order that the fine new church of the Old Meeting might be available for use; but, for many reasons, the Committee considered the present year more convenient. The local Committee heartily accepted the decision, and has loyally and unanimously done everything in its power to make the Conference a complete success.

The Committee then proceeded to prepare the Programme. Its first and earnest desire was to secure the services of the Rev. Dr. Martineau at the Communion Service, but, to its regret, the following reply was returned :—

THE POLCHAR, AVIEMORE, N.B.,

July 27th, 1884.

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is indeed a sacred function which you are willing to entrust to me ; and the very thought of giving voice to the common heart and inmost vows of such a band of fellow-disciples, deeply moves and unspeakably attracts me ;—all the more when it is presented to me almost as a virtual bequest from our dear friend, Mr. Gaskell, whose communion with us is now from within the veil.

But it is precisely the profound and solemn interest of the occasion which places me under disability, and forbids me to listen to your friendly pleadings and my own responsive wish. If advancing years had left me a little more of the admirable composure which, among higher qualities, marked out my venerated predecessor, Mr. Gaskell, for an impressive representative position, I would take your hand and suffer myself to be led into his place.

It is not so, however. Whilst his life never ceased to be before the face of men and in the blaze of day, mine has long been in the shade, with its work concentrated upon silent and lonely hours ; with the effect that, under the excitements in which he rose to his true element, it is my painful lot to sink out of the needful collectedness and self-control. Hence it is, that I am obliged to refrain from attending all public gatherings, however congenial they may be. The small remnant of service yet possible to me here is conditional, I am well aware, on cheerful acceptance of the limits of my cage, and steady resistance to the generous hands that would open the door and set the captive free. Alas ! the flagging wing would find the air too large and the gale too strong, and soon end the flight upon the ground.

Accept my heartfelt thanks and best wishes. In spirit I shall be with you, if not in person.

Always faithfully yours,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D., Harry Rawson, Esq.,

Rev. S. A. Steinthal, Rev. A. W. Worthington, B.A.

After prolonged deliberation, the Programme was completed in the following form :—

PROGRAMME OF PROCEEDINGS, &c.

TUESDAY, 14TH APRIL.

12-0 Noon.—Reception Rooms (Masonic Hall, New-street) open from 12-0 noon to 10-0 p.m.

1-0 to 3-0 and 5-0 to 7-0 p.m.—Refreshments may be procured at the Reception Rooms.

6-0 p.m.—Communion Service in the Church of the Saviour, Edward-street, conducted by the Rev. Thomas Sadler, Ph.D., assisted by Mr. G. St. Clair, F.G.S., and the Revs. C. T. Poynting, B.A., J. Robberds, B.A., and S. Fletcher Williams.

7-30 p.m.—Religious Service in the Town Hall. Devotional part conducted by the Rev. H. Enfield Dowson, B.A. Sermon by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A.

WEDNESDAY, 15TH APRIL.

9-0 a.m.—Reception Rooms (Masonic Hall, New-street) open from 9-0 a.m. to 10-0 p.m.

9-30 a.m.—Devotional Service in the Church of the Messiah, Broad-street, arranged by the Rev. C. C. Coe and the Rev. J. E. Odgers, M.A.

10-30 a.m.—Conference opened (Church of the Messiah), David Ainsworth, Esq., M.P., in the chair. Hymn. Two Papers will be read on "*Public Worship: the pressing need of Personal Consecration to its Services*," by the Rev. J. Page Hopps and H. Jeffery, Esq. Discussion opened by the Rev. H. Ierson, M.A. The Conference will rise for an interval at 1-30.

1-30 to 3-0 p.m.—Luncheon may be procured at the Reception Rooms.

3-0 p.m.—Conference resumed in the Church of the Messiah, Frederick Nettlefold, Esq., in the chair. Hymn. Paper on "*The Influence upon Religion of the Modern Development of the Critical and Rational Spirit*," by J. Allanson Picton, Esq., M.A., M.P. Discussion opened by G. St. Clair, Esq., F.G.S. Paper on "*The Duty of maintaining a Magazine of Religious Thought and Scholarship*," by the Rev. Philip H. Wicksteed, M.A. A Resolution in favour of establishing such a Magazine will be moved by Dr. W. B. Carpenter, C.B., F.R.S. The Session will close at 5-30 p.m.

5-30 to 7-30 p.m.—Tea may be procured at the Reception Rooms.

7-30 p.m.—Public Meeting, followed by Conversazione, in the Town Hall, under the presidency of his Worship the Mayor of Birmingham (Thomas Martineau, Esq.)

THURSDAY, 16TH APRIL.

9-0 a.m.—Reception Rooms (Masonic Hall, New-street) open.

9-30 a.m.—Devotional Service in the Large Lecture Theatre, Midland Institute, Paradise-street (arrangements for its use on this occasion having been made by the Old Meeting Congregation), conducted by the Rev. James Drummond, B.A., LL.D., and the Rev. R. Spears.

10-30 a.m.—Conference (Large Lecture Theatre, Midland Institute) Joseph Lupton, Esq., in the chair. Hymn. Two Papers on "*The Life of our Churches in its practical issues*," by the Rev. J. C. Street and Charles W. Jones, Esq. Discussion opened by T. Chatfield Clarke, Esq. Report of the Conference Committee as to the Sustentation Fund, to be read by Harry Rawson, Esq. Statement as to the Ministers' Benevolent Society, to be read by its Secretary, Dr. James Russell. Resolution recommending that the Conference be held triennially, to be moved by the Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S. Closing Resolutions.

1-30 to 3-0 p.m.—Refreshments may be procured at the Reception Rooms.

Evening.—Religious Services and Public Meetings in Birmingham and the neighbouring towns.

The Programme was issued with the following letter of invitation, to Non-subscribing Churches of the United Kingdom. This invitation, with suitable modifications, was also sent to ministers and laymen of Liberal Churches :—

FEBRUARY, 1885.

To the Secretary of the.....Congregation at.....

DEAR SIR,

A Resolution was passed at the Liverpool Conference held in 1882, re-appointing the Committee by which that Conference had been summoned, and instructing it to call a similar one at such period as it might deem advisable. A very strong opinion was expressed that not more than three years should elapse before the assembling of another; and the Committee, therefore, unanimously decided to summon a Conference during the present year.

A desire to meet in Birmingham has been generally manifested; and the members and friends of the various Unitarian and Non-Subscribing Churches in that town

kindly offered, in case Birmingham should be decided upon as the place of meeting, to provide all the accommodation and hospitality in their power.

We have now the pleasure of informing you that arrangements have been made to hold the Conference in Birmingham, on the 14th, 15th, and 16th of April, 1885, and on the next page we send you a copy of the draft programme.

The Liverpool Conference exercised an undoubted and striking influence upon our Churches. Those who were present were drawn together more closely by living bonds of sympathy as members of "one body," in which there are "diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." The discussions at the various meetings proved encouraging and strengthening in their tone, as well as replete with practical suggestions of value. The Religious Services deepened within every heart the conviction, that to aid in the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth is the great work demanded from all Congregations.

The Committee trust that you will make arrangements for your Minister, and as many representatives of your congregation as possible, to attend the Conference; and will be obliged if you will kindly bring the subject before an early meeting, and return to us the enclosed form, duly filled up. It is hoped that hospitality will be provided for your Minister, and at least one delegate from your Congregation.

The Committee issue this invitation in the confident hope that a Second Conference, held in the very centre of the United Kingdom, will bring together a large gathering of earnest Ministers and Laymen from all quarters, and will lead to results as valuable and invigorating as those attained in Liverpool in 1882.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

H. W. CROSSKEY,

HARRY RAWSON,

S. A. STEINTHAL,

A. W. WORTHINGTON,

} Honorary Secretaries.

You will facilitate the arrangements if you will kindly intimate, before the 9th of March, your intention to be present, and suggest the names of any Ministers or Laymen whom it would be desirable to invite, to

A. W. WORTHINGTON, Old Swinford, Stourbridge,
to whom you are requested to address all communications relating to the Conference.

The invitation met with a hearty and wide-spread response ; and the assemblage of ministers, delegates, and visitors, was probably larger than that gathered at Liverpool in 1882. The central position of Birmingham, and the large number of congregations in its immediate neighbourhood, doubtless added considerably to the attendance.

The invitation was also sent to various representatives of Free Christianity in Europe and America ; and, in addition to the letters from Bishop Ferencza and the Rev. R. N. Bellows, read at the Soirée (see pages 72 and 73), the following replies were received :—

BOSTON, MASS., *April 6th, 1885.*

To the National Conference of English Unitarian Churches, from "The National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches of America," Greeting.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

Your meeting comes so early that it is difficult to find our busy clergy or laity ready to lay down their work for a season.

We hoped to be represented by the Dean of the Theological School at Cambridge, the Rev. Professor C. C. Everett, and by the successor of Dr. Channing at the Arlington-street Church, once your countryman, now ours, the Rev. Brooke Herford ; but these gentlemen will be with you later.

We find, with pleasure, that the Rev. J. G. Brooks, formerly settled over the Church in Roxbury established by John Eliot, "the Apostle to the Indians," can attend your meetings, and bear to you our message of good-will and fellowship in the faith.

We heartily rejoice at every opportunity to bring our countries, and especially our churches, into a closer union and sympathy. We regard the times as propitious for the spread of our views, which have not only become the common property of, but are openly proclaimed from, many evangelical pulpits. If the actual acceptance of them has not been as rapid as we desire, we must still believe that by their wise presentation, by a more earnest missionary spirit, and by a more thorough organisation, they may be made a great power for good in the world.

To this end may we work together.

In behalf of "The National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches" of the United States of America,

JAMES DE NORMANDIE,

Chairman of the Council.

*Das Central Comité des Schweizerischen Vereins für Freies Christenthum an das
Committee der National Conference der Unitarian, etc., Congregations.*

VEREHRTE HERREN UND BRÜDER,

Sie haben uns vor einiger Zeit eine freundliche Einladung zu der vom 14—16 April, 1885, in Birmingham abgehaltenenen Conferenz der Freunde der Unitarischen und übrigen freien Christlichen Congregationen von England gesandt. Leider war unser Comité nicht im Stande, den Wunsch, unsern Gesinnungsgenossen jenseits des Canals unsere Grüsse persönlich zu überbringen, rechtzeitig zu verwirklichen. Um so mehr drängt es uns, Ihnen für die bewiesene Aufmerksamkeit zu danken und Sie zu versichern, dass es uns zur hohen Freude gereichte, aus dem reichen Programm zu ersehen, mit welchem Ernst und welcher Festigkeit die Sache des freien Christenthums in Ihrem Lande verfochten wird. Dieser Gedanke, dass überall und in allen Zungen das Zeugniß der Wahrheit erklingt, hat auch uns zu neuer Hingebung an das gemeinsame Werk gestärkt. Mit der Bitte, uns auch ferner als Ihre Mitarbeiter zu betrachten, versichern wir Sie unserer brüderlichen Ergebenheit.

Im Namen des Central Comité's des Schweizerischen Vereins für freies Christenthum der Praesident,

W. BION, PFARRER.

Der Actuar: FR. HEMMANN.

Zürich, den 11 Mai, 1885.

[TRANSLATION.]

*[The Central Committee of the Swiss Union for Free Christianity to the Committee of
the National Conference of Unitarian, etc., Congregations.]*

HONOURED SIRS AND BRETHREN,

Some time ago you sent us a friendly invitation to the Conference of friends of the Unitarian and other Free Christian Congregations of England, which

is to be held in Birmingham on the 14th—16th April, 1885. Unfortunately our Committee was not in a position to realize at the right time the desire to convey in person our greetings to those on the other side of the Channel of kindred mind with ourselves. All the more are we compelled to thank you for the attention you have shown us, and to assure you that it has afforded us great pleasure to recognize in your ample programme with what earnestness and firmness the cause of Free Christianity is maintained in your country. The thought that everywhere and in every tongue the witness of the truth resounds has strengthened us also to new devotion for the common work. With the request that you will continue to regard us as your fellow-labourers, we assure you of our brotherly devotion.

In the name of the Central Committee of the Swiss Union for Free Christianity,

W. BION, *Professor*.

FR. HEMMANN, *Secretary*.

Zurich, 11th May, 1885.]

A word must be added to this brief statement, in order to express the cordial thanks of the Committee, and the Conference at large, to the ministers who gave their able assistance at the several Religious Services ; to the laymen who occupied the chair at the successive meetings, and to the readers of Papers at the various sessions. Special gratitude was felt to the Mayor, Mr. Alderman Thomas Martineau, who granted the use of the Town Hall for two evenings, and himself presided at the *Conversazione* on the 15th ; to the Local Committee, whose arrangements for the Conference were universally acknowledged to approach, if not to reach, perfection ; and for the hospitality so generously rendered to a very large number of visitors at the Conference.

At the suggestion of the Rev. W. Carey Walters, a Sub-Committee was appointed to arrange for Devotional Services, where desired, in the chapels of Birmingham and the neighbourhood, on the evening of the last day of the Conference. The following circular was issued :—

NATIONAL CONFERENCE, &c.

*February, 1885.**To the Minister and Warden of the**Congregation,*

DEAR SIRS,

It has been suggested that Special Religious Services or public meetings should be held in the Free Christian Churches of the Midland District on the evening of Thursday, the 16th April, immediately after the close of the Conference ; and we have been appointed by the Committee to make the needful arrangements for this purpose.

This plan has been adopted with singular success in connection with the meetings of the Congregational and Baptist Unions for some years. It is hoped that, if the suggestion prove generally acceptable to our Churches, such services will help their spiritual life, and materially deepen the interest created by the Conference.

We would suggest that the Services should be conducted by the Minister of each Congregation, with the assistance of one Minister and one layman appointed by the Conference Committee, and of any other gentleman whom the congregation may desire ; and that the Services should be religious, and not controversial in tone, with a distinct bearing upon the practical work of the Conference.

Your cordial co-operation in this scheme is most earnestly desired, and will be deemed a source of encouragement.

Kindly communicate with Mr. Worthington, Old Swinford, Stourbridge, at your earliest convenience, stating whether you wish that a meeting should be arranged in connection with your church.

We remain, dear Sirs,

Yours very truly,

H. W. CROSSKEY,

W. CAREY WALTERS,

A. W. WORTHINGTON.

Accordingly, on Thursday afternoon and evening, 16th April, Religious Services or Meetings were held at several of the churches in the neighbourhood of Birmingham. A brief account of these will be found at the close of this Report.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST DAY.

ACCORDING to the Programme contained in the Introduction, the SECOND CONFERENCE, like the first, commenced with a touching and memorable gathering for the COMMUNION SERVICE, in the CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR, erected many years ago by the Congregation of the late George Dawson. The Rev. Dr. Sadler delivered an impressive Address, and the bread and wine were distributed to the Communicants by Mr. G. St. Clair, F.G.S., Minister of the Church; the Rev. John Robberds, B.A., of Cheltenham; the Rev. S. Fletcher Williams, Minister of New Hall Hill Chapel, Birmingham; and the Rev. C. T. Poynting, B.A., Minister at Platt, near Manchester. The large Church was well filled by a congregation which included Ministers and Delegates gathered from Great Britain and the Sister Isle, as well as many Residents in Birmingham, and Visitors from the neighbouring towns.

A RELIGIOUS SERVICE was held at half-past seven o'clock, in the TOWN HALL, the use of which was generously allowed for the occasion. It was attended by a large congregation.

The Rev. H. Enfield Dowson, B.A., of Gee Cross, conducted the Devotional Service. He read the 4th Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and offered Prayer.

The Sermon was preached by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A., of Liverpool.

S E R M O N .

THE CHURCH FREE AND CATHOLIC.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in Unity."
—PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

"Giving diligence to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."—
EPHESIANS IV. 3.

"Till we all attain unto the Unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—EPHESIANS IV. 13.

BRETHREN in the Spirit ! From every quarter of this land we have come together for worship, for fellowship, for counsel. Who are we that have come together ? Whom do we represent ? For what do we stand ? What is our bond ? What is the purpose of our churchmanship ? Wherein lies that unity which will pervade all that we say, lie behind all that we propose, ensure amid all diversity that thrill of common sympathy by which we know that we are one people ?

An assembly such as this is itself a declaration that we are one : wherein is the essence of this oneness ?

We are united, indeed, in that we worship God ; but therein millions are united with us also, who, nevertheless, are not of that fellowship which is represented here to-night. Only the atheist is against us. We are united in that we acknowledge righteousness as the only just rule of life ; but therein men who care for goodness everywhere are united with us, of whom yet the major part are not of this communion. Only they of base ideals are against us. We are united in that we are of that historic growth whose seed was in the life and word of Jesus of Nazareth ; but therein all Christendom is united with us, though the major part of Christian men would feel no drawing towards this hall to-night. Only those other worlds of the vast Orient, of the red man and the sable, are

against us. What is the unity which this great congregation, this organised conference, these groups of men and women up and down these islands whose fraternity we claim, imply? Some unity there must be, felt if unexpressed, real if undefined; or our good and pleasant dwelling together for these three days would be destitute of meaning, devoid of purpose.

Let us try to draw an absolutely inclusive circumference from which not one of us shall feel shut out, yet a circumference everywhere sufficiently near its centre to encompass only those whose unity of spirit is expressed by this assembly. And let us seek that the marks of our fellowship to be thus displayed shall be not those which are superficial or accidental, but those which are true characteristics, giving actual substance and fibre to our brotherhood. What people are we that have come together hither?

From whatever point of view we approach this problem, we can hardly do other than recognise that the primary principle, which at once holds us together and marks us off from the rest of Christendom, is the Freedom of our thought. In other groups of Christendom there may be men who think as freely as we think; but they are individuals adventuring alone; they are not citizens of a community practising its constitutional liberties. In the pulpits of no other fraternity of churches is the commission of the preacher so distinct from the engagement of an advocate. Among the members of no other fraternity of churches is there so absolute an absence of assumption of control over the opinions of their fellow-worshippers.

If the reiteration of this patent and fundamental fact of our churchmanship has sometimes grated on the ears of brethren impatient for positive Christian service in our midst, if to them it has seemed that the liberty alleged was something "vague" and "negative," it is, perhaps, because we have been too prone to dwell on it as an end in itself, whereas we should have laid the stress on the high and noble service which is its proper fruit, the fulness of church-life of which it is the proper soil.

For a second characteristic belonging to the very essence of our churchmanship is the demand for an absolute Veracity therein. In no other section of Christendom is the imperial claim of truthfulness so unservedly acknowledged. This freedom which we claim is good, because

it is the condition of that truth in inquiry, truth in expression, truth in action, which is the very health of a community. For that truthful habit we stand here before the world to-night. Truth in inquiry : no man has taken to his soul the proper spirit of our communion if, in the silent meditations of his own mind on the mysteries of death and life, of earth and heaven, of man and God, he covers up the thought that suggests strange questionings, or of set purpose turns himself exclusively to those considerations which promise to land him in the desired doctrine. Truth in expression : no man has taken to him the spirit of our churches who, standing before his fellow men to speak the word laid on him, closes his mouth against the convictions of his heart, forces his lips to shape words that ring with no echo to his soul, or tortures phrases consecrated in the popular mind, to cover beliefs which they do not naturally express. And truth in action : no man has taken to him the spirit of our churches whose actions in social and public life are out of correspondence with the animating principles of his own thought. Rather does that proper spirit of our churches—the spirit which is to them life and breath and being—drill minds to brave and manly thinking, and tongues to honest and transparent speech, and hands to noble and philanthropic deeds ; so that of faithful and unfaltering students of the true, of earnest and honourable persuaders towards the right, of high-minded and fearless pursuers of the good on the lines of social and political reform, we have had, have now, and still shall have, far more than our share when the fewness of our three hundred churches is reckoned beside the multitudinous membership of the rest.

And to this veracity of habit, rooted in the liberty of our churchmanship, belongs that absence of cant which is so strongly characteristic of our brotherhood. Not the most bitter of our assailants has ever laid cant to our charge. That hideous vice is bred of the habit induced by some outward pressure to profess that which the mind at its core does not believe. No such pressure has part in our communion. We are born to freedom, bred to sincerity ; and, therefore, cant—that most powerful of all stimulants to the rejection of religion and the abhorrence of religious profession—cannot live with us ; and our direst enemies will confess, while they question the measure of our devoutness, that whatever devoutness we show is real.

But out of this constitution and temper of the churches here represented to-night, proceed other characteristics less obvious to our perception, but not less actual and not less momentous.

I find the first of these to be our universal acceptance of the principle of the progressive nature of religious truth as apprehended by the human mind, or, let me more accurately say, the principle of man's Progressive Apprehension of Religious Truth. Nay, we have never "accepted" that principle, as a man has never "accepted" the colour of his hair, or the proportion of his stature. It has grown in us with our growth. It is bone of our bone, fibre of our fibre, spirit of our spirit,—a necessary form of our daily thought. By this principle we gently pass with the rise and fall of the generations from thought to thought, from synthesis to synthesis, from ideal to ideal. That, which to the minds of other churches is revolution, has been to the minds of our fathers and ourselves evolution; what they call destructive, we call constructive; what they deem death, we deem growth. There are differences among us as to the application of this principle; free men cannot be without such differences; but on the principle itself there is no divergence in our ranks. No man who breathes the air of our churches believes in the finality of revelation. The principle of other churches is static; the principle of ours is dynamic; and if science and philosophy have any clear utterance for the ears of men to-day, that utterance is this,—that in all institutions, and throughout the field of nature, the dynamic principle, and not the static, is the condition of life, growth, spontaneity, and power. Ours is, by principle and immemorial habit, the true, the vitalising conservatism, that conservatism which understands that the germinant essence of a society, of a nation, of a church, attains at each successive epoch its maximum of fertilising power only by the ever-changing adaptation of its forms and methods to the new environments by which it is surrounded. We know—as no other church has ever shown that it knows—that the Fatherhood of God, the Immanence of the Holy Spirit, the Brotherhood of Jesus Christ, the love of all the children of men, the passion for righteousness, the burning of the divine light in the heart of the prophet—are powers not once for all completed in the world, but to wax and thrill and throb to ever increasing victory, as larger thought and purer ways shape for expanding achievement the inward spirit of man.

The next of these less obvious characteristics which appear to me to mark off our churches from all the other churches of the civilised world is this: the principle of the Consistency of the Lines of Truth. Men may pursue knowledge in the domain of history, the domain of science, the domain of philosophy, the domain of religion itself. It is of the vital essence of our thought that these several lines do not proceed disjointedly. They are to us as the fingers of a man's right hand; each separate truly; yet all connected at the wrist, each governed, guided, and controlled by whatever force may be in the forearm. For us history and true criticism, for us science and theology, can never point in opposite directions. To us it is not possible, with Faraday, to dissociate spheres of truth. God's universe is one. And each great and epoch-making canon of human thought, once won by the genius of the pioneer into the common stock of one region of human knowledge, it is natural to us at once to bring to bear with all its solvent power in every region in which we walk. I do not speak of the great scholars and philosophers among us; I speak of the men and women who are the body of our churches; and I say it is alien to their genius—even though they may be able to give no account of their own methods of thought—to apply one law here and an opposite law there; to employ one method for the history of the Romans, another for the history of the Jews; to apply one method to their solution of the strange power of John Wesley over the rude miners of the Cornish coast, and another to their solution of the power of Jesus over the fishing folk around the Galilean lake.

Even as the apostles of scientific speculation proclaim at this hour the uniformity of structure of the ultimate atom of tangible matter in Earth and Sun, in Sun and Sirius, in Sirius and the clusters of dusty light on the outskirts of the universe,—the uniformity of atoms gathered by the like laws into the like substances enshrining the like titanic and reverberating forces,—so is it the genius of our churches to see the uniformity of the ways of God in his whisper to the wakening soul of savage man, in the solemn chant of his Holy Spirit in the breast of Tauler, of à Kempis, of St. Paul, in the supreme symphony of the Holy Ghost in the bosom of Jesus, the consummate Son of Man.

Lastly, this is a mark of our churches, along with the communion of the Friends; the principle of the pure Spirituality of Religion.

We have our disputations among ourselves in the realms of historical, of literary, of scientific inquiry. Some shrink from conclusions which others willingly embrace. Some deplore where others rejoice. Some warn where others encourage. But we are one, are we not, in this,—one, all of us who have come together to this Conference, one, all the brethren scattered north and south whom to-night we represent,—that this or that historical opinion, that or the other literary verdict, one or another scientific view, is not itself Religion; that religion, however enkindled, however depressed in the hearts of men by conclusions in these outside realms, is not itself, cannot by its nature be, actually therein involved? The science is at most the scaffolding, not the temple; the history is at most the palisade, not the building. Nay, even the theology is at most the wall four-square, and not the shrine. God is a Spirit, and we are spirits; and our felt relation to him, which is religion, must be also spiritual purely; is a thing above all the questions that critics discuss and scholars debate,—a holy secret in the breast of every man, as real, as holy in the breast of the humble labourer in the green fields, or the little child lisping “Our Father,” as in the breast of the theologian who can explain the hypostases of God, or the priest who claims to offer up once more the Christ.

These propositions, then, I lay down to-night. We are one with believers everywhere, in that we worship God. We are one with all earnest men, in that we count righteousness the sole just rule of life. We are one with all Christendom, in that we owe an inestimable historic debt to Jesus, the man of Nazareth. But we are aloof from all other ecclesiastical groups, while united among ourselves; first, in that our churches are built up in the principle of Freedom; secondly, in that our churches are built up in the principle of Veracity before all conformity; thirdly, in that the principle of the Progressive Apprehension of Religious Truth by man has full way amongst us; fourthly, in that the principle of the Consistency of the lines of Truth has full way amongst us; fifthly, in that the principle of the pure Spirituality of Religion has full way amongst us. I lay these things down not as any creed to be subscribed. I allege them not as a group of specific doctrines. I proffer them not as opinions which it were well we should accept. I exhibit them as the facts of our being, the methods in which we all

spontaneously think and feel, the characteristics actually having sway amongst us, the secret of the unity of which we are conscious though we can give to it no name, the explanation of the impulse which has led us to seek each other out for conference and fellowship, of the alacrity of our churches from the granite north to the chalk-cliffs of the south, in sending us hither delegates to consult on their duties and their hopes.

And I say of each and all of these characteristics that they are ours, and ours only among the churches of the land. In Cathedral and in Bethel, it is true, many a worshipper, even a preacher here and there, is charged to the full with these same pregnant principles. But the divergence between their position and ours is absolute. They, every one of them, share in a churchmanship of which the stated basis and all the historic tradition is clean against these principles; we have a churchmanship from the very constitution and make of which these principles spring forth. They have been reached by them in spite of their ecclesiastical association; they are our heritage by reason of our ecclesiastical association. To them, if at all, the enfranchisement has come by bursting the bonds which still hang loose about their limbs; to us the enfranchisement is the outcome of the birthright we have inherited from our fathers.

Now, men and women of the Free Churches, these broad and simple habits of thought and judgment, which are characteristically yours, are the congenial soil for a religion simple, manly, fearless. They give a tone to religion which the world needs sorely in its religion at this day. They foster a religion which cannot be impaired by the typical diseases which from the first till now have beset religion. Religion cherished amid these principles cannot become marred by sacerdotalism; it cannot be fossilised by fixity of doctrinal definition. Its sympathies cannot be narrowed or dried up by the touch of theological self-righteousness. It cannot become divorced from the other great and solemn interests of human life. It does not tend to suppress, but to enrich, to purify, to ennoble the life of the artist, of the student, of the merchant, of the politician. It solves in a higher unity that duality of thought, of interest, of purpose, which opposes the Church to the world, the Sabbath to the week-day, the temple to the market, the preacher to the professor, the sacred to the secular. And therein it approves itself the religion in which is regeneration from the world's evils, the promise and potency of the world's supremest good.

Therefore, say I, let us acknowledge to ourselves, and acknowledge with rejoicing, the Unity which is so clear, so vital, so pregnant, so charged with beneficent potentiality. This Unity of the Spirit is truly worth the keeping. We say no word of blame to those whose feet stand not on this soil, whose pulse is not quickened by this bracing, this vitalising air. We hold out hands of brotherhood to them without an unkind afterthought. We desire to labour side by side with them in every good and useful work. We rejoice in whatever sacrifice they lay on the common altar of Christendom. We bid them God-speed in every effort to purify, to sanctify the lives and hearts of men. But none the less we recognise the closer unity—and thank God for it—which has brought us together here to-night, that unity founded in the great principles of freedom, veracity, breadth of conception, and progressive movement which mark our churches pre-eminently among the churches of the world.

Our churches, do I say? Nay, our CHURCH. We, also, are One Church, though we be scattered over many cities. Ever, indeed, the first will we be to recognise that

One holy Church of God appears
Through every age and race.

In that vast and sublime communion none can rejoice with hearts more whole than we. No other group of men can thank God for that rich fellowship so wholly without misgiving as can we. Yet none the less this fellowship we will also recognise as real, this community of sentiment and habit by which we have been drawn to one place even now, by which at this moment thousands whom we love in distant towns and cities are thinking of us, praying with us, hoping with us, rejoicing with us. The closer fellowship which comes of like habit of mind in the deep things of the spirit is too precious a gift to be lightly cast aside. The hearts that beat with our hearts, the souls that pray with our prayer, we can ill afford to ignore or to despise. The walls of a true Church of God it needs no articles, no confessions, no ecclesiastical ordinances to build up. The boundaries of the New Jerusalem may be registered in no Court of Arches. It is community of principle, community of sentiment, community of aspiration that make unity of churchmanship; it is these that create and hold together federations of men in that most solemn and glorious form of human association, a living Church.

We have dreaded practical union and co-operation, because we dread and abhor Sectarianism. We do well to abhor Sectarianism. Its spirit has been the deadly blight upon the broad Church of Christ. Its spirit has struck impotent, for all holy ends, many a Church that proclaimed itself custodian of the keys of heaven. Its narrow, self-righteous, base, and ignorant spirit has made it possible for men even to question whether Christianity has bred more good or evil in the world. Sectarianism has palsied Rome and paralysed the right arm of Protestantism, so that its grasp on the nations of Europe is relaxed. But the unity of groups of men in sentiment, in aspiration, in principle, in labour—nay, the confession, the accentuation of that unity—is not Sectarianism, but God's one law for effective and generous work at the hands of man. Union is never Sectarianism, be it union of many or of few. Sectarianism is exclusion, and is always based on the assumption that the excluded are in some way inferior in the sight of God. Where there are fairness, sympathy, and kindness towards such as are not of the union, there can be Sectarianism never. Sectarianism is an attempt to limit freedom. A union founded on enthusiastic allegiance to the principle of freedom cannot be Sectarian. We are jealous, before all things, for the one principle against which, before all things, the jealousy of Sectarianism is launched. Sectarianism bases itself on the final truth of particular opinions. Its evil lies in conceit, in narrowness, in ignorance, in the doctrine of finality. A union formed not by any premeditation, but by the spontaneous sense of brotherhood engendered in men who repudiate all those evils is to Sectarian organisation as light to darkness, as health to sickness, as life to death.

There is nothing, be persuaded, the reverse of liberal in union springing from loyalty to freedom, from devotion to veracity, from allegiance to religious progress, from perception of the harmony of all the spheres of truth, from conviction of the absolute spirituality of religion. Church-life on that basis will bear not one mark of the sectarian temper. Only in the exact measure in which individuals among us depart from those principles in their sublime and generous integrity can the sectarian temper emerge in our midst, and bring forth its ugly brood of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Brothers and sisters in the love of God and man, companions in that

pure, untarnished Christianity which Jesus proclaimed for all the ages—it is no light responsibility that rests on us as a Church in the face of the world to-day. As surely as we know that God's hand will bring up the sun to-morrow to suffuse the fields with light, we know as well that the Church which shall be in the future when the kingdom of God has come, the Church of the vast brotherhood of man which is to be, can by no possibility be any other than a Church free like ours, veracious like ours, progressive like ours, like ours holding to the absolute spirituality of religion. No other Church can endure when that great time shall come. No other Church can become the heaven-ordained instrument to bring about that time. Our Church, indeed, may break down utterly. It may perish and leave not a wrack behind. It may go down in the vortex of the forgotten things, and the waters may cover the place so that no man shall recall its name. But our Principles are the principles in which to-morrow, and next day, and through all time, lies the redemption of the world.

The mightiest human movements have ever been the movements of religion. Too often fanaticism and fierce bigotry and persecution have marred and spoiled the religion, and rendered gross and carnal the effects which the movements have wrought out. And so men in our day, even religious men, think that great social and political reforms, which are to bring the dawn of brighter days on earth, are to be compassed apart from religion. Men see the folly, the sectarianism, the bitterness, the ignorance which are called Christianity. And they shut out religion from its true and royal dominance in the mending of the world. *We* know that religion must penetrate, permeate, saturate every social, every political reform, if it is to be strong, victorious, beneficent. We know that the fervour, the constancy, the devotion of religion is the only force with which man is endowed by God sufficient for the bringing of the commonwealth towards which our hearts aspire. We know that no energies divorced from religion can bring the day when each man shall dwell in a decent home, and the fruits of the earth shall be for all, and extravagant idleness shall be deemed a deadly sin, and knowledge and humanity shall be the common heritage of each, and labour shall be cheerful, and commerce shall be honest, and laws shall be few and just, and the nations shall learn war no more. And knowing that, we know as well that it is

religion bred on this soil of freedom and veracity and love of progress, this soil on which our Church is raised,—that it is such religion only which can be God's potent instrument towards that sublime achievement. Who, then, can find words to tell the magnificence of our opportunity, the solemnity of our obligation, or, if we rise not up to our task, the profundity of our shame?

You of the one sole Church absolutely Free and Catholic on the face of the earth to-day, I seem, no doubt, to not a few of you, to use the language of strange exaggeration. We, we few, we scattered, we unorganised, we who do not deem church-going essential, we who mix light-heartedly in the world, *we*, the chosen people on whom is laid that awful, that stupendous responsibility? No, I do not say that we are the chosen people. I have a great fear that we are not worthy. But I say that ours are the chosen principles. And to you, bred in those principles, united in them, strong in them if only you care to be strong, I say the invitation is given to be leaders in that vast regeneration covering the whole of the social sphere, by which alone at last the true brotherhood of our race in sonship and daughterhood to God can touch its blessed realisation.

And so do I desire with great desire that you men of wealth, of influence, of culture, who are doing so nobly and so generously in the cause of political freedom and equal justice and redemption of the sordid monotony of common life, should perceive that the cause of our Church is your cause too; that with as free a hand as you support every movement which makes for political emancipation or social melioration, you should support every movement promotive of the influence of our Church. And I desire that you, women of refinement, with as pure a devotion as you give yourselves for the education and the comforting of those who are ignorant or in distress, should give yourselves to instilling everywhere religion conceived in these principles of freedom, of veracity, of spirituality, refusing to believe that such service is touched with the sectarian taint. And I desire that you, young men and women, you who are to rule the world to-morrow, you who yet hold in your hand, hardly impaired, the divine and priceless gift of earthly life, should rise up into consciousness of the magnificence of your heritage in these eternal principles of our Church, and take to yourselves vows of fidelity in the incomparable service to which you are called of God. Above all do I desire that you, fathers and mothers, with

the awful, beautiful trust conferred upon you of little children to train for the work which God shall give to them to do, may instil into them loyalty to the sacred principles in which our Church is founded. For I hold that on you who are here to-night, and on your kith and kin up and down the land who are bred in the Freedom and Catholicity of our Church, it depends whether a great and beneficent historic part lies before that Church in the salvation of this nation, or a downfall such as that which belongs to those on whom the voice of God calls aloud, but who are not worthy of the call.

Yes, truly I am persuaded that if we, this Catholic Free Church of England, shall count for little among the forces which are to bring the great redemption to the earth, it will be, not because our principles are not worthy, but solely because we have not believed in their worth or in their might. And I recall, as I look forward to what the doom of our Church *may* be, that solemn word of the wise ecclesiastic of the ancient day, "Woe unto him that is faint-hearted ! for he believeth not ; therefore shall he not be defended."

But ah ! brethren in the spirit, surely that shall not be. Surely, surely, there are love and quiet fervour and strong conscientiousness enough among us, with clearness of vision, to teach us to join together, hand in hand and heart to heart, in frank and generous brotherhood, giving diligence to keep the unity of the spirit, not in the bond of peace alone, but in the bond of steadfast and manly resolution, for the task we are set to do. Turn we our eyes to the strand that borders the margin of the lake, where the brown sails fleck the blue waters, and the fishermen of Galilee ply their simple trade. Note the form of one who wends quietly down the rugged street, while now his kind hand rests a moment upon some little auburn head, and now the lips move in winning speech to soothe some troubled heart. See the penetrating look he casts now upon one mending his torn net, now on another sitting at the receipt of customs, and hear the grave behest, the "Follow me," that falls from the lips with their strange mingling of an unspeakable tenderness and a heaven-wrought power of command. And one and another rise up and follow him, follow him wistfully, wonderingly, not knowing, not foreseeing, but trusting him who calls. And through village and rustic town they follow him day by day. And where women gather to draw water at the well

or husbandmen come together to the rural markets, the kind eyes look out upon the crowd, and the quiet wonderful words are spoken, and their music finds out the secret places of the heart, and the little band stand round him, obedient in their service, waiting for the things that are to be. And lo ! the ages pass, and armies tramp the globe, and empires rise and fall ; but among the myriad powers in the moulding of the world, the power proceeding from him and from such as rose up and followed him, has proved the most enduring, the most prevailing, and is at this day the most potent and permeating of them all.

And we, O brethren in the spirit, in our day and land are few. On our right hand superstition still forges chains for the minds of men, fell bigotry stifles the free voice of conscience, fanaticism blurs the gentle love of God. On our left hand the spirit of the world lays hold on the souls of men, and the foolish say, not in their hearts alone, but with blatant cry, that there is no God. And in the midst are we ; against those we stand for freedom, for absolute veracity, for progress from age to age ; against these for the power of prayer, for divine communion, for the mind of Christ, for the religion of the Spirit. Look out upon the broad earth, and behold the work which we have to do. Shall we be idle, careless, indifferent ? Shall we be timid, hesitating, afraid ? Or shall we, too, listen to the little word stealing upon our ears in the hush of night, breaking in imperial command upon us in the din of day : " Follow me ; take up your cross, and follow me " ?

Be you of the brave, the true, the faithful, the believing ; engage in the great crusade, and yours shall be the assurance of the victory. The memory of all the great and good of the former days shall be your benediction !

The great hearts of the olden time
Are beating with you full and strong ;
All holy memories and sublime
And glorious round you throng.

The truths ye urge are borne abroad
By every wind and every tide ;
The voice of Nature and of God
Speaks out upon your side.

The weapons which your hands have found
Are those which Heaven itself has wrought,
Light, Truth, and Love ;—your battle-ground
The free, broad field of Thought.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DAY.

THE Proceedings on Wednesday, the 15th April, commenced with a DEVOTIONAL SERVICE in the CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH. Punctually at half-past nine o'clock, the Rev. J. E. Odgers, M.A., commenced the Service by giving out the hymn, "Now with creation's morning song," after which he offered prayer, and read a Scripture lesson—(I. Cor. xii. 27—xiii. 13). After another hymn, "I worship thee, sweet Will of God!" an earnest Address, On the true Conformity of the Will of Man to the Will of God, was delivered by the Rev. C. Hargrove, M.A., who closed with the Lord's Prayer. The Rev. C. C. Coe then read, with some modifications, a beautiful selection from the "Discourse on Prayer," by the late George Dawson, M.A. After a third hymn, "What comforts, Lord, to those are given," the Rev. W. Carey Walters gave a short Address, based on the words, "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above;" closing with the hymn, "The Lord will come, and not be slow," and a brief prayer.

A large congregation assembled to join in this impressive service, which lasted nearly an hour, and closed at half-past ten. Immediately afterwards,

THE MORNING SESSION

Of the Conference was commenced in the same building. A large audience joined in singing the hymn, "Lord of all being! throned afar."

The Chairman, DAVID AINSWORTH, Esq., in opening the proceedings, said :—

I regret that I am not in the same position as Mr. Heywood was in opening the Conference at Liverpool three years ago, in being able, as a native of Liverpool, to give you a welcome to that town. Unfortunately, I am not a native of Birmingham—not even an inhabitant. But every one of us can congratulate ourselves, very heartily, in being present to-day, in such numbers, in a town which is second to none in the kingdom in holding and expressing broad liberal views, in both religious and civil matters. I think, indeed, we may take a valuable lesson from Birmingham, and see from the organisation—which is now known beyond the precincts of Birmingham itself—in what a remarkable way persons having political views can get those views adopted throughout the whole United Kingdom. The Conference which we held three years ago in Liverpool has certainly had very satisfactory results ; and I am glad to feel, by the numbers which are here to-day, and by the most cordial and kind reception which has been given to us by our friends in Birmingham, that this Conference will be in no way behind the other. Some may have doubted whether any good was done by our Liverpool Conference, but the Report which has been published of its proceedings is sufficient proof of the valuable information which was there given to the public. We are always reminded that the particular sect to which I belong—the Unitarian—is only a small party ; but it has also been said, with great truth, that "a small party is a party of action" ; and it surely behoves us to remember that, the smaller we are, the more we ought to do. A great impulse was given, and a hearty feeling engendered among us by the meetings in Liverpool, of which I need mention only one particular—namely, the impulse which was given to the Augmentation Fund and the establishment of the Sustentation Fund, in consequence of the very able paper which was read by Mr. Rawson on that occasion. If nothing should result from our meetings in Birmingham but that we come together, and see other friends and other sects, and hear their opinions, I think great good may arise. I have not had an opportunity of hearing to what extent our friends in other non-con-

forming bodies are represented on this occasion, but I sincerely hope that they are here in large numbers, and I would give them a very hearty welcome, and make them feel that we are indeed "brothers" in every sense of the word.

The Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS then read the following paper on

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

IF THE subject allotted to me should be by any one regarded as destitute of novelty, I, at all events, should not complain. But bread and water and salt are also destitute of novelty, and yet none the less are they rightly regarded as the great necessities. There are interesting problems of philosophy or theology, "abreast of the age," as we say, that might have tempted us, and that would be good for speculation and debate; but as representatives of worshiping communities, you will probably agree with those who arranged the programme, that we cannot do better than consider the subject of public worship in the lights that our special needs, dangers and duties supply.

It ought to be frankly admitted that there is a somewhat ominous suggestion in this subject, "Public Worship; the pressing need of personal consecration to its services:" and we must be prepared for the inference that those who are responsible for it think there *is*, in some directions, a lessening regard for the claims and blessings of public worship. But too much ought not to be made of that; for, if we put the emphasis on the word "*need*," we shall have, as a result, not the suggestion that interest in public worship has decreased, but that our need of it has increased,—that, in fact, there are special circumstances in our day that make public worship more than ever a necessity. For my own part, I prefer that reading of the subject, though I think something could be said for the other view of it, and for the inference that, in our judgment, we do need to "strengthen the things which remain."

Public worship can be regarded from many points of view; and it admits of many explanations—carrying us all the way from the bare meeting-houses of the "Friends" to the elaborate temples of the priests with their mysteries, their incantations, and their charms. It is probably true of us that we have in theory hit the golden mean. Putting aside superstition and the priest, we yet recognise the sanctity of religious aspirations, the venerableness of devout associations, the pathos of memory,

the preciousness of hope, and the solemnity of personal communion with the Unseen. But we feel that *all* life might be religious, that all the works of man might be prayer to God, and that all ours might be His.

“Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line,
Severing rightly his from thine,
Which is human, which divine.”

Still, though, as Emerson says, “God builds his temple in the heart, on the ruins of churches and religions,” the human heart persists in sighing for fellowship and sympathy, and what are fellowship and sympathy but the basis of public worship? Add reverence and humility to fellowship and sympathy, and there is all you need to make public worship a great necessity, and as great a joy.

Emerson says again: “It is certain that worship stands in some commanding relation to the health of man and to his highest powers, so as to be in some manner the source of intellect. All the great ages have been ages of belief.” “What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship? Then all things go to decay.”

It is sometimes said that the world might outgrow public worship and be none the worse for it. That remains to be seen; if, indeed, the experiment is ever to be tried. It is certain we have not tried it yet; and there are many of us who, without being superstitious, feel inclined to say—“Let me not think of it—that way madness lies.”

It is all very well to point to men and women here and there who can do without it, and who seem to be none the worse for the want of it; but it must be remembered that they are living on the capital which worshipers have earned, and enjoying a condition of Society which, to an enormous extent, worshipers have made, and are making, sweet and good.

If I were speaking to any young men who had drifted from public worship, I should say:—Have you considered that you yourselves are living on your past, or on the past of others? You cannot tell what unlimited lawn-tennis and boating, or even what years of nothing but Board-school lectures would end in? There was no mere rhapsody in what a plain man of the world once said about this; but he put the life-experience of millions into a sentence when he said, “When I was a boy I went to church because I was obliged to go, and when I became a

young man I went to church because I felt it a duty I owed to a young family growing up around me ; but now I go to church because I like to. I hear something that makes me better, makes me feel that I have more to live for in the world ; that I am living in the present, not in the past or in the future ; and I try, as far as I can, to follow out those instructions." Equally simple and explicit were the Lancashire working men who, in a debate in a discussion society on the question whether lawyers, doctors, or ministers were the most useful to society, voted in favour of ministers, on the very suggestive ground that, if they did their duty, the others, lawyers and doctors, would not be wanted ! I may be prejudiced, but I think there is a deal of truth in that. It is true that a witty commentator added :—"Yes, but if we all did our duty, ministers would not be wanted ;" but I am not so sure of that, for the minister's vocation includes not only instruction in duty, but inspiration for the uplifting of the conqueror's song of praise.

The men and women, then, who are doing without public worship give no indication of what the prolonged absence of public worship would do for the world. So far as we can see, the old orthodox believers were right when they called public worship "a means of grace" ; and if human experience is of any value, it is an undoubted fact that a great multitude which no man could number *have* felt the grace-giving influence of it. It is as true as ever that man cannot "live by bread alone," but that he needs also the "word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" : and if it is true, as we believe, that the word of God does come home with special force and pathos when worship is joined in by kindred souls, the argument for public worship, from this point of view, seems complete. And yet, half in jest and half in earnest, sometimes altogether in earnest, we hear it said that a man can worship God in the fields as well as in the Church. "Perhaps he can," said a wise man once, "but *does* he?" I wonder whether we shall go on in this direction until we hear it said that a man can as well worship God playing at lawn-tennis, as in attending public worship. Thus there may actually come into existence a cant of the absentee, which shall be as really cant as the cant of the devotee ; for the use of the word "worship" in such instances is a glaring case of exaggeration, tinged with self-deception, which is of the very essence of cant. Besides, one of the

surest notes of the worshiping spirit is an increase of sympathy and love,—sympathy that suggests fellowship, and love that suggests anything but selfish isolation.

But, even in cases where, in the fields, a man *may* have emotions of gratitude, aspiration and joy, these are not emotions of the same kind as those which come to us when we meet together; for there is a virtue in “common prayer,” and a grace in the gladness of many hearts, and a joy in the blending of many sympathies, and an uplifting in the mingling of many voices, that no loneliness can give. One of our own poets has told us, that bright is God’s presence on the “rapt soul apart;” and blest the raptures that break from “unaided lips:” but, “in a waiting, burning throng,” He comes with new brightness, and with added raptures for the soul that adores and loves Him, “dearer still, in company.” And this witness is true.

But now, even though one really has outgrown the need of public worship, or personal interest in it, that absolves not from all part and lot in the matter; for he who does not need “to be ministered unto” may all the more be bound “to minister,” and to give up his inclinations, or, say, his pleasure (Jesus said his “life,”) “a ransom for many.” The alternative to the Church is not necessarily the fields, the tennis lawn, or the club. Love for one’s fellow creatures might suggest a class for instruction or delight, or even a mission-room in a slum. For, consider it; if a man really has exhausted the uses of the Church for himself, only think how wise and good he must be, and how remarkably well equipped he must be for the higher uses of public worship in giving a helping hand to others. In deciding, then, to give up the divine service of worship, a man may pass on to the at least as true divine service of work; and find his “personal consecration” in *that*.

This is, perhaps, a view of public worship which needs special emphasis just now; and the question might with justice be put to those who are gliding away from it, whether they have sufficiently considered what it is they are really doing—especially whether they have considered what those who depart leave to those who remain. To an enormous extent, they who worship and consecrate themselves to worship and to all that it involves keep the world bright and hopeful; and the Mondays and Saturdays of those who turn from the work and worship of the Church

would not be what they are but for those who remain. We have a right, then, to ask those who give up public worship, whether they have sufficiently considered the fact that they are not only giving up something for themselves, but are really shirking work that ought to be done for others.

It is here we come to a consideration which will have weight, I think just in proportion as it is seriously pondered. Public worship is not an act of selfishness. It is a great social act, which attains its completeness only when self is sunk, and sympathy freely flows. In a very profound sense it is true, that in public worship we worship for others as well as for ourselves. In relation to public worship, I confess myself something of a socialist; that is to say, I recognise the binding nature of that which is properly expressed in this very phrase, "public worship."

But if fellow-worshippers have claims upon us, consider how much more serious are the claims of the *young*. Young people need the special influence of constancy, and to use the words of my subject, of "personal consecration," as an example. A fickle and half-hearted example is no example at all, except of fickleness and half-heartedness. It is the thing that comes round regularly that touches the imagination, and wins the concurrence of the young. They are clever enough to take but little notice of fickle April gleams of goodness. It is the steady sunshine that impresses them, the steady example that tells.

"If I neglect public worship, then," a man should say to himself, "the community is injured, the brotherhood is weakened, the young are confused." It is a grave responsibility.

But now we must not shrink from the question, How far or how long ought these considerations to hold the man who has lost delight in public worship, or faith in that to which it bears witness? When should doubt make worship impossible, or unbelief make worship wrong for the honest soul? When should "personal consecration" say to a man, not *stay*, but *depart*? It is a grave question, and every one must shape his answer for himself. All I would say is: Give worship the benefit of the doubt: ay! give fellow-worshippers the benefit of the doubt. Continue with them as long as you can,—if not as a full believer, then as a devout inquirer, a gentle seeker, a sympathetic friend. Why not? That is possible with us; for the very bond of our union is sympathetic regard

for one another's freedom. It is also specially possible with us because our teachings do not, at all events, outrage the reason and shock the moral sense. Even an agnostic might listen to us, and hope that our Gospel is true.

Forgive me a personal reference here, but it is so much to the point that I cannot resist offering it to you. Some time ago, a member of my congregation who moved the annual ministerial vote of confidence said that he did it with all the more pleasure because he so often was unable to agree with me ; and because it was so delightful to him to look up from his doubts to a man who evidently had a faith. Was not that charming ? and why not ? That element in a congregation gives to it an interest, ay ! and a vitality, which could never come of stereotyped conformity.

Of course, if anyone feels that he *is* doing wrong in joining in worship that expresses no truth for him, he is better away ; only he should not be in a hurry. As long as he can he should sit like the blind man by the wayside, and cry—"Lord, that I may receive my sight." Still, I admit there *may* come a time when he must go ; but it will not be because lawn-tennis, or a country walk, or the club, or the library offers superior attractions. It will be because, in sober sadness, he has found out the meaning of the words even for him,—“He that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith ; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

But, thinking now of those who are, at all events, not yet committed to unbelief, and who at least *hope* that there is One who is conceivable as the Great Intellect and the Great Providence of the universe, I would fain urge with all my might the serious consideration whether, in the presence of such a stupendous hope or possibility, so long as a man can entertain it, public worship is not one of the very noblest and most sacred acts of life.

We have, indeed, escaped from the superstition which connected supernatural efficacy with the celebrations of the priest, but we have not discarded religion which connects the in-flowing of the grace of God with the adoring love or devout aspiration of His children. So, then, the “personal consecration” of public worship is, in a sense, personal consecration to God. There *is* something sacred in the blending of our

sympathies, thanksgivings, and aspirations in the act of worship ; and he who has ceased to feel that needs, not to congratulate, but to examine himself. The sanctity of worship is based on the reality of God. If it were not so, our psalms, our prayers, our adoration would all be meaningless. If it were not so, then might we turn the church into a secular hall, substitute an atlas for a book of hymns, and hang up a diagram instead of offering up a prayer.

It seems to me, then, that the call for personal consecration comes home with overpowering force to those who still believe, in any sense, in God.

Another suggestion is discernible in this phrase, "personal consecration." It is one which relates to the spirit in which we should come to public worship. Take, as a symbol, the laggard feet that come, as though every minute were grudged that brought the worshiper a second too soon ; and the hasty feet that go, as though a benediction needed not a moment for consideration or reception. It was more than a jest when one said to a fellow-worshiper who was hurrying in from the street to the church, without a break in his speed,—“Do you go in like that? I always stop in the porch and count ten.” Why should we not all be seated quietly five minutes before the time? Does not “personal consecration” suggest anything as to that?

The irregularity, also, of attendance upon public worship might be cited as an instance of neglect or levity which “personal consecration” alone can cure. In days gone by, attendance upon public worship was a habit, and nothing that could be avoided was allowed to interfere with it. Twice on the Sunday, too, was the rule, and, not as now, the decided exception. But with many it is now becoming once every other Sunday, or scarcely that ; with so little of “personal consecration” in the matter that the need for an umbrella may decide the doubter not to go.

Do we not, again, listen too much merely for delight? and does not the question “How did you like the sermon?” or “How did you like the service?” indicate that we join in the service and listen to a sermon in an entirely wrong spirit. The spirit of the true worshiper is not the spirit of the pleasure-seeker but of the self-surrenderer,—the spirit of one who can say—

“ No longer would my soul be known
 As self-sustained and free :
 O not mine ! O not mine own !
 Lord, I belong to Thee.

In each aspiring burst of prayer,
 Sweet leave my soul would ask,
 Thine every burden, Lord, to bear,
 To do Thine every task.”

In that is the true spirit of “personal consecration” for worship. The critical or self-regarding spirit has its uses, but it may be fatal to “personal consecration” in public worship. How often does an entire service depend upon our own temper, our own mood, our own spirit ! And how often is it true that a congregation has as much to do with the making of a minister, as the minister has to do with the making of a congregation !

The old phrase, “communion of saints,” is full of meaning here. It is what we need—that we may be delivered from self-care, and escape from the web of our private desires and the isolation of our private needs, and bless our souls by sacrificing our desires, and suffer the spirit of God to lead us out of ourselves, and give us the blessing by helping us to forget the self-seeking that is in so many ways our bane.

Still, it must be admitted—and I say this with all humility and deference, though it must be said—that we who are ministers need to very seriously consider whether there is not a cause when worship is neglected. The peculiarities of our position bring to us special dangers. We are still on our defence, and we are obliged, to some extent, to be a Church militant. In another direction we are bound to be critical and scholarly ; and, in yet another direction, our protest against irrationality induces the excessive cultivation of intellect in worship. It is for us to consider, for instance, whether our written prayers have not been too much like polished themes, whether our discourses have not been too much like finished essays, and whether the whole tone of our worship has not been too formal, restrained, and dry. More imagination, more joy, more simplicity, more humanity, more fervour, more love, more *abandon* :—let us try what these would do.

And now, a parting word on what the subject calls “the pressing need.” It is well known that there is, in churches of all denominations,

a general though perhaps not serious decline in the interest taken in public worship ; and I do not think that Unitarians have very special reasons for concern on this matter. At the same time we need not disguise it that we, especially, have lost many of the ties that held our fathers and mothers to public worship. We have got farther away from belief in the special sanctity of times and places. We have got farther away from the belief that God and His grace are confined to any earthly "sanctuary." We have got farther away from belief in the "benefit of clergy," and the saving grace of sacraments, and the direct efficacy of prayer. We have added to all this an individuality, and, we may say, a self-assertion, which the older worshippers knew very little of ; and all these put in peril regard for public worship. A wise man will be on his guard against these influences, and will not suffer them to have too much power over him ; but they very much constitute "the pressing need of personal consecration" to public worship in our day.

Special dangers call for special safeguards, special consideration, special wariness. It is an age of splendid advance in science, of restless energy in business, of stupendous activity in politics, of daring questioning everywhere. All that makes against public worship ; and yet all that makes public worship a greater necessity, and demonstrates "the pressing need of personal consecration" to it. God only knows what we should do without it, and the blessed Sunday !

" Dear old commemorative day !
For weary man designed,
To help him on life's troubled way,
To give his spirit freer play,
To soothe his harassed mind :—
A day of worship and of grace,
One calm sweet day in seven,
To grant a little breathing space,
To strengthen man, life's work to face,
And lift his life to heaven."



The Chairman then called upon Mr. H. JEFFERY to read a second paper on the same subject, which he did, as follows :—

I THINK we must confess, even in the absence of statistical figures, that persons who profess what are known as “liberal” religious views are not, upon the average, nearly so regular in attendance upon public worship as are the adherents of the various sects which, for convenience sake, are usually called orthodox. No doubt the term “liberalism” in religion is often applied in a very wide and indefinite way. It is frequently made to include those whose doubts go down so deeply and destructively as to leave scarcely a vestige of theological belief. Agnostics may be warm in heart as well as keen in intellect, but no one should expect them to meet every seventh day to address the Unknowable. The complaint of neglect of the regular Sabbath services is alleged in regard to families and individuals who are the constituents of the Churches represented at this Conference. If any of you refuse to make the admission, and are disposed in that respect to uphold the religious honour of the brotherhood, I can only appeal to your ministers and elders of widest experience. Better admit a defect than shut our eyes to it, if it actually exists. Do we not all know chapels usually so thinly attended that the service scarcely thaws, and a stranger looking in is in danger of a death-chill ; while, within a quite practicable radius, numbers of nominal sympathisers live whose presence would fill the benches, warm the preacher’s heart, kindle a glow of devotion in their own breasts, and the case would no longer be one of suspended animation ? Many highly respectable persons, paying a liberal pew-rent, and handsomely subscribing otherwise, are known to be very irregular in attendance. These are the men who if, in any sense, props of the Church, have been rightly described as buttresses—not pillars—they are so much outside. Their money is good—the more the better ; but, if they would only give their presence along with it, its value would be enhanced tenfold. In my days of inexperience amongst Unitarians, I was occasionally told that this or that eminent person was known to hold Unitarian views. When it occurred to me to ask, “Which of your places of worship does he attend ?” the answers seldom seemed to me satisfactory.

One circumstance which has come under my observation I hope you will excuse me for mentioning. Whatever may be the prospects of

Unitarians in the next world, they pretty generally know how to make the best of this. In large proportion they seem to have the faculty of getting on. Emphasising, as all our teachers have done, the excellence of the moral virtues, it is only in the natural order of things that many of our people should prosper in worldly goods. Then comes a time when the trader or professional man is called, by his improved circumstances, to set up a larger domestic establishment, and take a correspondingly finer house, probably out of town and far away from his old neighbourhood. Now, am I rudely intrusive when I ask whether, in such cases, it does not often happen that vicinity to a suitable place of worship is about the last thing thought of? Our Puritan forefathers always considered nearness to "gospel privileges" an all-important matter in deciding where to pitch their tent. But when one of our modern liberal religionists goes away with his family to some locality where there is only the Established Church or orthodox dissent, and he makes no provision for worship in accordance with his convictions, he and his children have no alternative but conformity, or heathen indifference. Have not many of the best families been lost in that way to our household of faith?

Possibly the neglect of which we complain is, to some extent, the result of a protest which, in itself and within due limitations, was called for. The mere external act of church-going was, not very long ago, insisted upon, not so much as an aid to religion as of its essence. The observance has been mixed up with much superstition. One's bodily presence in a church was supposed to be miraculously efficacious in conciliating God's favour. The form was major, the spirit minor. Hollow-ness of that kind should be unsparingly exposed. Against hypocritical pretence or superstitious dependence upon ceremonial observance our preachers have cried aloud and spared not. So powerfully, indeed, have they done this, that, in many instances, they have preached away their own hearers. The latter are of the class who fly from one extreme to the other. It is from such we hear, "O, I can worship as well in my own chamber or in the fields as I can in church. I am a disciple of freedom, and object to be tied to antiquated forms. Nature is the temple of Deity, and 'the solemn organ's peal wakes not my soul to zeal like the wild music of the wind-swept grove.'" Now, if your experience accords with mine, you will have observed that, with some exceptions, the people who

talk in that way never, in any full meaning of the term, worship at all. They say they can worship in the privacy of their own apartments or out in the open, but the misfortune is—they don't. Their Sunday excursions may be harmless and very pleasant, but there are no signs of religious reflection or exaltation in those "outings." When they stay at home on Sunday mornings, do you think they are engaged in prayer? Alas! we suspect they are availing themselves of the quiet hours to think out some piece of business set aside from the week-day interruptions of the city; or, if ordinary avocations are suspended, then the newspaper, the magazine, or the last new volume of memoirs is much more likely to be found before them than a book of devotion. George Eliot, in one of those yearnings for religious communion which remained with her through all the sadness of her loss of faith, wrote to a friend, "One wants a temple besides the outdoor temple—a place where human beings do not ramble apart, but *meet* with a common impulse."

Will our respected ministers excuse me, a humble layman, for being so bold as to think that many of their excellent sermons are delivered to the wrong people? Sometimes I have listened to discourses which would have been of immense value if preached to the 1,500 people in an adjacent orthodox chapel, but which to our half-hundred or so was only a slaying of the slain, a setting up of the corpses of some of our old dead ideas, just to knock them down and bury them again. I have heard dissertations on the evils of fanaticism addressed to a frigid score or two in the pews of a capacious meeting-house. It is very clear that *our* danger does not lie in that direction. To caution an assembly of Unitarians against over-excitement in their devotional exercises, is about as appropriate as it would be to advise dwellers in the arctic circle to beware of sunstroke.

It seems to me that we have come to pay too little attention to stated forms and observances. Every strong emotion of the soul naturally seeks to express itself in some outward fashion. The spirit must clothe itself with the material to become manifest. Deprive religion of the opportunity afforded by public worship of satisfying this instinctive want, and the consequence would be either that it would perish for lack of exercise, or that that its force, unnaturally pent up, would accumulate until it burst forth into a flaming fanaticism, or buried itself in some gross super-

stition. The children of unreligious Freethinkers make the devoutest Roman Catholics.

In the exercise of the functions of the human body there is a law which physiologists call the law of periodicity. Persons accustomed to retire to rest at a certain hour feel sleepy when that hour approaches. If you make a habit of dining at a particular time the sensation of hunger marks the time as accurately as the clock. Physicians tell us that the observance of this periodicity greatly facilitates the easy working of the various organs of the body, and that much irregularity is sure to produce unhealthy derangement. There is an exact parallel to this in the action of our mental and spiritual nature. The daily demands of business or study are rendered comparatively easy by the uniformity of their recurrence. So, if at stated periods, we shut out other engagements to give our spiritual nature its appropriate exercise and aliment, it will be more likely to grow in health and strength than would be the case if attended to only at haphazard odds and ends of time. We read of Jesus that "he went to the synagogue as his *custom* was on the Sabbath-day."

Not always, however, as the hour of worship comes round are we in the mood for entering upon it with delight. The world has been a good deal with us, some of our schemes have gone awry, troublesome people have ruffled our tempers, little annoyances keep turning up unexpectedly, the wind is in the east and the sky is overcast, and we take anything but a cheerful view of the general arrangements of Providence. The old Adam within us would fain persuade us to stay at home and indulge ourselves in a little pessimistic grumbling. But suppose we have, in some time of good resolution, put ourselves under a kind of sacred promise on no account to give up the regularity of our church-going, we probably have too much regard for consistency to yield to the temptation of the moment. We set forth, then, in what cannot be called a Christian frame of mind. Soon, however, the sacred associations of the place begin their softening influence, the bright faces of the children coming in from the Sunday-school rebuke our discontent, the words and music of the first hymn steal in upon our hearts, a sense of shame stirs within us, we earnestly join in the penitential prayer, the mists are dispersed, and we stand once more rejoicing in God's sunshine.

Because in ecclesiastical systems excessive regard has been paid to

places and seasons, it does not follow that all places are alike hallowed, or that there are no seasons of unusual exaltation in the human soul. Nature acknowledges no such uniformity. She has her stretches of dreary plain and her reaches of mountain grandeur, she has her wintry death and her harvest fulness. Because pharisaic Sabbath observance was a superstition, and large numbers of modern Christians have borne the yoke themselves, and desired to impose it upon all around, there does not cease to be supreme value in a day set apart for rest, with allotted hours for common prayer and discourse of divine things. Churches, no doubt, have drawn too sharp a distinction between the sacred and the secular. Religion has been too much a concern of Sundays only. Very beneficial has been the insistence, by our liberal preachers, that religion is misunderstood unless we think of it as having application and influence in all the affairs of life. That was essentially Christ's idea of it.

But it would be absurd to suppose that there are no gradations in motives, and no real distinction between the sacred and the secular. Whatever is concerned with the mere animal struggle for existence, the exclusive regard for one's own sustenance, and the enjoyment of pleasant things, is surely secular; although it is possible for the religious spirit to so suffuse the soul that the commonest daily toil ceases to be selfish drudgery, and becomes a sacrament of duty. But when we say religion should not be simply an affair of one day in the week, let us bear in mind that we had better have it on that one day than not at all. When we protest against priest-made distinctions between the sacred and the secular, we should remember that it would be no improvement to do away with differences by reducing all to the level of the lowest. Let us not secularise religion, but put religion into the secular. Our course in this matter will all depend upon whether we look down or look up. As Carlyle tells us, it is one thing to say with the evolutionist, "Man is a little higher than the ape;" and quite another and a better thing to sing with the Psalmist, "Man is a little lower than the angels."

Protestant Nonconformists, including our own predecessors, who used to be called "Rational Dissenters," have, for the most part, laid too much stress upon the sermon as the principal feature of the Sunday assembly. Worship in many cases, in the different denominations, has become quite a secondary consideration, unless, indeed, it be the worship of a favourite

minister. Now, unless we hold a true idea of what should be the motive and end of our gathering ourselves together, we drift into wandering and indifference. The prime attraction and object of our church attendance should, of course, be the united worship of God, the bringing of ourselves into felt communion with the infinitely Holy One, the expression of our noblest aspirations in prayer and songs of adoration and love to the Eternal Source of all goodness and beauty, and the nurture of the germ of immortality within us, by surrendering ourselves to the unseen and spiritual.

Speaking from a layman's point of view, I am of opinion that on all ordinary occasions the sermon should hold a place of subsidiary importance. In that place, too, it should be in harmony with and tend to deepen and confirm the sentiments evoked by the service that has preceded. When the soul has been led through the gradations of penitence, supplication, and thanksgiving, to sing its hymns of rejoicing faith, then to have to listen immediately after to some coldly-analytical or semi-scientific discourse, is to be submitted to a refrigerating process good neither for the head nor for the heart. Occasional courses of lectures from the pulpit, on subjects of pretty wide range, are no doubt very useful; but I submit that general lecturing and spiritual preaching are widely different in method and effect. We must expect that people who go to church from no higher motive than to hear able discourses on miscellaneous topics will, in time, become intermittent in attendance. After a year or two we get familiar with the main lines of thought and expression of even gifted ministers; and then, as there is no longer novelty to attract, we drop in only occasionally, unless a sense of duty and desire of devotion are in our hearts. Miraculous powers would be requisite for a minister to enable him to prepare two fresh, lengthy, bright discourses, week after week and year after year, for the same people, whose disposition to be critical his own teaching has, perhaps, too much encouraged. It is an almost impossible task. In trying to do it a preacher is sorely tempted to take up subjects which belong more properly to the politician or to the lecturer of a mechanics' institute, than to the pastor of a Christian Church. Why might not some of the services be solely of a devotional character, stately as may be with collect and anthem and holy song; and perhaps, with a ten minutes' homily from one of our great divines, instead of the usual sermon?

You will remember that George Eliot, in one of her letters to Miss Hennell, mentions going with a friend to hear Dr. Martineau, and being disappointed, as one whom she calls "a respectable old Unitarian gentleman" occupied his place. She proceeds: "I enjoyed the fine collection of collects he read from the Liturgy. What an age of earnest faith, grasping a noble conception of life, and determined to bring all things into harmony with it, has recorded itself in the simple, pregnant, rhythmical English of these collects and of the Bible! What a contrast when the good man got up into the pulpit and began to pray in a borrowed washy lingo—extempore in more senses than one!" It would not do for me to speak of any of our ministers in that irreverent fashion. Still, with all respect, I would submit that George Eliot's words have in them some useful suggestiveness.

May not a decline of interest in our Sunday services be attributable, in some degree, to our having, in reaction from the opposite extreme, formed too low an estimate of the efficacy of prayer? If, in the past, requests have been addressed to Heaven, selfish in essence and grotesque in their minuteness, it does not follow that we should, in deference to an unemotional rationalism, suppress altogether the natural instinct to express our wants "as well for the body as for the soul." Because we do not expect God to send rain or sunshine in compliance with our view of agricultural needs, are we, then, to be wiser than Jesus, and strike out of the Lord's Prayer "Give us this day our daily bread?" It is a sad perversion of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to make it an excuse for shutting off the communication of our needs to Him; for, if we have a genuine sense of our dependence upon Him, words of supplication can be suppressed only by an unnatural effort. By all means let us recognise the fixedness of natural law, and let our minds be clear of the expectation of a miracle to be worked for our special behoof. But there remains, nevertheless, the possibility of free communication between the spirit of God and the mind of man, as between friend and friend, or father and child. Our mental moods, our felt wants and requests, must affect our relationship to Him, and consequently His dealings with us, unless free-will and moral differences are ignored. The laws of the material universe are unchangeable, but man can yoke them to his service. If so, what may not the free communion of God and man in prayer effect, in many blessed ways

through all the range of human interests? Dr. Martineau has well observed that "a large proportion of temporal events are not like those which are dealt out to us from the mere physical elements; they come to us with a mixed origin,—from the natural world, indeed, yet through the lines of human life, and as affected by the human will. Whenever the human will or elements of character enter the result, so that it will differ according to the moral agent's attitude of mind, it is plainly not beyond the reach of a purely spiritual influence to modify a temporal event." To these pregnant words of Dr. Martineau's I will venture to add my own conviction, that if you teach that prayer really brings no blessing from God, and is of avail only for such benefit as we *confer upon ourselves* by a kind of mental gymnastics, your people will soon get tired of the performance, as diminishing congregations will make sufficiently evident.

It would be presumptuous in me to inquire as to the extent to which family worship and private prayer prevail, or are declining, in the homes of our people. But, in conclusion, I do not hesitate to say that, when the mind is incessantly engaged for six days of the week, getting gain or seeking pleasure, with no intervals for direct thought of divine things, it is too much to expect that the devotional exercises of Sunday can be entered into with much zest. While we should be shocked at a minister going unprepared into the pulpit, let us laymen beware of going unprepared into the pew. We cannot be pagans six days of the week and good Christians on the seventh. The ideal of the religious life can never be reached until the thought of God and of our responsibilities in his sight abides with us the week through, purifying and sweetening our secular pursuits, and making all days holy with a worshipful spirit.

For every day should leave some part
Free for a sabbath of the heart;
So shall the seventh be truly blest,
From morn till eve, with hallowed rest.

The discussion on the papers of the Rev. J. Page Hopps and Mr. Jeffery was opened by the Rev. H. IERSON, M.A., who said :—

MR. CHAIRMAN and CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, I do not understand that the object set before me is to attempt to criticise the papers to which you have listened, but rather to take up one or two of the threads of thought and carry them on. I presume that such will be the tendency of the discussion which takes place this morning.

The choice of the subject at the beginning of this Conference indicates, I trust, the growing desire on the part of Unitarians to cultivate more directly, and more fully, the devotional and religious element of their faith. We have tried, not without good success, to place our views before the world. I think that those views commend themselves generally to the intellect of the people, who, indeed, always show interest in them as common-sense ideas; but if there be one thing more than another that will attract the interest of men in connection with those views, it will be as they see that religion, as distinct from theological opinion, is the great thing you wish to place before them. The question before us is, therefore, one which concerns very materially the whole future of our Unitarian Churches. I remember, many years ago, when I first made the acquaintance of Unitarians—whom, up to that time, I had been taught to regard with almost a feeling of horror and alarm—the one thing that struck me especially was, that they seemed wanting in religious feeling—at all events, such as I had been accustomed to. Now, the proper reply I think that you might make to an objection of this kind was suggested in the admirable discourse to which we listened last evening, when the preacher said that “at all events, it was admitted on all hands, that whatever devoutness Unitarians had, it was real.” I soon came to learn better, and to know the true inner spirit of the Unitarian body, and have always found myself very much in harmony with its general religious tendencies. But these have not grown, you will allow me to say, as I should be glad to see them grow. Whatever may be the causes that have hindered the growth, it seems to me that, in connection especially with public worship, there is much room for improvement. You must have noticed a great similarity between the two papers to which you have just been listening. Both presented a tolerably agreed picture of Unitarian experience, and offered similar suggestions of improvement in regard to public worship. The gentleman who represented the lay side of the question put before us various things which I think we shall do well carefully to ponder over; but he had little to say in sympathy with such as are understood to be of the character of “buttresses,” as he said,—supporting the church from the outside. The endeavour to show sympathy with these gentlemen came from the clerical side. I trust that those friends, whoever they may be, in our communities, will earnestly reflect upon the words addressed to us this morning, with regard to the solemn responsibility connected with our uniting in public worship with our fellow-believers. You perceive that the subject with which we are now dealing is very far from being a dry one, far from being an unpractical one; and if it were possible to devote even more time than the short space of this morning’s hour, I think that to examine this question more fully, and consider the best manner in which to promote a proper ideal of liberal Christian worship would be a very useful, desirable, and practical object. There are certain things that concern the mere details of worship. It is not so much on these points that we can enter very profitably into discussion; but as to the general principle that the worship should represent our conception of what the real object of that worship is—whether it is to conciliate

Almighty God, or whether it is intended simply for human benefit—this is a matter well worthy of our earnest attention. Now, entering into communion with our brethren seems to me to constitute the true essence of that worship, and I think it would be wise that our thoughts should at present be directed into that channel.

I suppose that it often costs our ministers a great deal of care and thought to arrange the service, when they are about to conduct one, in such a manner that it shall produce a unique effect—all tending to leave upon the hearer's mind one deep, religious impression. There may be other preachers who take another view of the matter; and I think that the comparing of these views would be extremely profitable. Of course, it is not easy—with the general ideas presented to us last evening of the principles which we maintain—it would not be easy to adopt any hard and fast rule; neither am I sure that it would be a wise thing to attempt it. It seems to me, however, that we have the same principles for each individual church; and the ultimate thing to which we must come is, how those principles affect each individual minister, and how they affect the mind of each individual who comes to worship. Mr. Hopps, in his paper, in dealing with veracity, considered the question of how far a man who no longer sympathised with the worship, and whose real feeling the words of worship did not represent, was justified even in joining with others in that worship, and pretending to assist in such solemn ceremonials. Well, I do not know; but I feel a very strong sympathy, as I see that Mr. Hopps does, with any earnest-minded man who becomes so impressed with the necessity of being true to himself, especially in these days of serious doubt and difficulty, upon this greatest of all questions. But I think that, notwithstanding this, it may be possible so to frame our services as that there shall be such an expression of common sympathy and devout feeling as that every honest man would be able to unite in—at all events attend upon—such worship. And then, if the question were asked, "What shall be the inducement for such a person to attend?" the answer will be that, whatever duty he owes to himself, he owes a duty also to others, and if it be not absolutely an unvarnished thing for him to join in the service, his mere presence will be a help and blessing to others who may more heartily unite therein.

The Rev. J. HARWOOD, B.A., said:—At the risk of being set down as one of the fools who rush in while the angels keep their seats, I venture to rise to make two or three remarks. The point upon which I wish to speak is one which came before us in both papers, and was emphasised by the remarks of Mr. Ierson; and that is, that we have a great variety of thought and feeling amongst the members of our congregations. Some are able to believe a great deal more than others, and the very practical question which arises in a minister's mind is, as to whether he is to adapt his services to those who believe the most, or to those who believe the least; or whether he should try and get an average, and hit the medium thought of the congregation as a whole—all the time, of course, being perfectly true to himself. For I do not mean to insinuate that there are any of our ministers who believe a little, and are trying

to appear to believe more than they do. But, in trying to give expression to what is in their minds and hearts, are they to give *full* expression to their feelings, so as to reach the man of highest calibre ; or should they repress their feelings, lest they discourage those who believe very little ? Now, in connection with this matter, I will just mention an incident which occurred, not to myself, but to another minister. He was called upon to conduct a funeral service by a family, the head of which had distinctly given up attending all religious services. He was a Positivist, and he thought, therefore, that the minister might, as far as possible, adapt the service to the position of a Positivist. Anticipating that, he said to the minister, "I do not want you to lower the service to suit my views ; make it as religious as you possibly can." That incident illustrates the point upon which I just wish to say a word, and that is, that I think all people,—sceptical people, who are, at the same time, earnest in their scepticism,—who are sceptical, not from indifference, or any desire to throw aside religious restraints, but simply from loyalty to their convictions, (and I venture to say that these are the only people with whom we have much concern) I think they will not take any offence whatsoever, but, on the other hand, will find it a real help to come into the presence of a man of deeper, higher, brighter religious faith than they possess. Therefore I feel that the practical rule for ministers, in the conducting of services, and also in general religious discipline, is to aim at the very highest point to which we can reach, in justice and loyalty to our own intellectual convictions ; not to try to water down our services to reach the lowest capacity, but to reach the highest point we can.

MR. ROECROFT said :—I have listened with pleasure to the excellent papers which have been read this morning, which are full of sound information. But, as a humble layman, I would like to suggest what I consider to be an omission in relation to those papers ; which is that, in my opinion, the sermons which are preached ought to be more adapted to our children and Sunday scholars, for the very reason that the success of the church—and that is the end of public worship—the success of the church depends not simply upon ourselves, but upon the rising generation. In the past, the schools have been used mostly as a means of secular education ; but, as education has become a matter of the law, it is not so great a need in our Sunday schools as it used to be. I think, therefore, that now, if the ministers would take upon themselves to form classes in connection with the teachers, to teach the principles of true religion, and if the teachers, in their turn, would present these truths to the children in their various classes, it would no doubt have a very good effect upon the success of our churches. Therefore this question, to my mind, is one of very great importance. The various matters which have been placed before us are of advantage to each and all ; and if, as I have suggested, the ministers would take upon themselves to form a "communion of saints" (as was referred to in one of the papers), and the teachers would bring to bear as much sympathy and love as possible for the training of the children, so that they should have an affinity for worship in the various churches, I think it would be a great advantage, and would ensure the success and prosperity of our Church.

MR. J. T. PRESTON said :—I feel some diffidence in rising to speak on the present occasion, because I am not in the least prepared, and I did not at all intend to have said anything, but rather to listen to the words of very much wiser people than myself. But, rather than there should be any delay, I will just say a few words from my own experience of about fifty years amongst our denomination. I cannot but think, in looking back over those fifty years, that the attendance on public worship is very different to what it was then. When I was brought up, and attended a place of worship, it seemed to me that the attendance there was as regular as it was for a man to go to his place of business in the week-day, and I cannot but say that my experience has been that there is a very great falling-off in that respect. Why this is so, I really can hardly say ; but I fear it has been in a great measure due to the falling-off on the part of the parents themselves, in bringing up their children to attend regularly upon public worship. It has been a great mistake, possibly, in years gone by, that parents made it rather a duty on the part of children to go to chapel than a pleasure to them ; and I, for my own part, as far as my own children were concerned, never would compel a child to go to church, or induce them to go, unless they really wished it ; and I believe that it was that feeling—that it was a pleasure to them to go, and to go with me and their mother—which induced them to attend so regularly as they did. I think the papers read by Mr. Hopps and by Mr. Jeffery go over an immense deal of ground, covering the whole ground which can be covered in this matter. I look upon it that a very large number of our people who now attend our churches, very unfortunately do not go for public worship, but really for the purpose of having their brains tickled by the minister for the time being ; and, also, that a very large number of our people are really not members of any of our churches, but are Martineauites, or Crosskeyites, or some other “ites,” and go for the purpose of hearing a particular gentleman preach, and not for public worship. This is the great mistake our people make—they do not go to church for public worship, but to hear the particular man who preaches. I know perfectly well that there are many instances where our people are in the habit of going to church, who have gone to the door, and when they found it was not their particular preacher who was going to discourse to them, have turned back again, and gone away. Now, is that going to God’s house for the purpose of worship ?—God knows what it is ; but it is not my idea of worship. Both gentlemen, in the papers they have read to us, have touched upon the fact that there is a large section of our community now who have a great idea that they can worship God just as well in the fields as by attending church. This is one of the greatest mistakes that can be made. I can emphasise this, that those who profess to worship in that manner really do not worship at all. It is all very well to say that they *can* do it ; but the question is, do they ? I feel that, in the great majority of cases, instead of devoting themselves to some religious work, these people are rather devoting themselves and their time to some secular work, or in reading the news or the latest novel. What is the remedy for this state of things ? I confess I cannot

suggest any. Religion is so much a matter between man and his Maker, that, if a remedy were proposed, it would be difficult to carry it out. It is all very well to say that the minister must do this, that, and the other, and that the congregation must do this, that, and the other. Of course, we know there must be sympathy between the pulpit and the pew, or there can be no real worship ; but how to arrive at a just conclusion, I really can hardly see. I think the suggestion made by Mr. Jeffery is worthy of consideration, and that is, that we should have occasional services, in which there should be very much less from the pulpit, and a great deal more from the pew—the congregation joining in prayer, and in the singing of hymns of a devotional character, which lead them up to God. The nature of our sermons is, I fear, of too philosophical a character. I have a very strong feeling that a number of our preachers preach very much above the heads of their people ; they also preach upon matters, which, I think, are not directed exactly to the congregations to which they preach. I think, very often, that if they could preach to outside individuals on such subjects, their remarks would have very great weight ; but preaching thus to the congregations they do, is only going over ground which has been threshed out years ago, and fighting with enemies which have long ago been slain. I do not at all object that we should have doctrinal sermons occasionally, and I think it is very important, especially, that our young people should be instructed in those principles which guided us and our fathers ; but it is difficult for one standing in my position as a layman to dictate to ministers what they should say. I know it is difficult for a minister to be always finding something new to say, and, therefore, I speak with very great diffidence upon that subject. I, for my part, am always content to take my share of what sermons are given, and am thankful to think that what does not suit me does suit some other individual. It frequently happens that, owing to the critical nature of our audiences, as you go out of a place of worship, you will hear the question asked, “What did you think of the sermon?” “Well,” a person will say, “I do not at all agree with it ; and, if that is the sort of thing we are going to have, I shan’t come here any more.” Now, it appears to me that we should be satisfied if it pleases somebody else, and say, “Last Sunday I had something which I did agree with, and, perhaps, next Sunday I shall have it too ; if I cannot agree with it to-day, somebody else does ; I am satisfied.” All I say is, if we go to church in that critical spirit, it is not worship that we go for, and we are not doing that which will elevate our minds, or benefit us in the future.—Allow me to make just an observation with regard to the publication of the papers which have been read to-day. It would be an exceedingly good thing if we could have them printed ; but I fear very much whether we are justified in going to much expense about it—whether the report reaches the individuals we want it to reach. Taking our congregations as a whole, you will find that, when we have any church meetings, those who are doing the most are present and willing to help ; but those who merely come in occasionally, render no help, and never read any of the reports you send them. So it is, I am afraid, with the printing of these reports ; those who are here,

and have already heard the papers, will be glad to read them in their printed form, but I very much doubt whether many outside this meeting will care to do so.

The Rev. J. W. LAKE said :—Unless the discussion had been flagging, I do not know that I should have ventured to have spoken to you on the subject which has mainly engaged our thought this morning, seeing that it is almost entirely exhausted in the very admirable addresses which we have heard. But I will just throw a line of thought across you, which has not been touched upon in the papers read. Rather more than twenty-five years' experience of being a non-subscribing minister has shown me that, among non-subscribing churches in this country, it is almost impossible to have truly Public worship. You may have worship among your particular party, but there are influences which prevent you from getting the ear of the general public—you can get the ear only of your immediate supporters. Now, I think we should not separate from a meeting like this without entering a strong protest against the presumption of that church which is the public church of the people. In a town and place such as this, you have a semblance of public worship ; but, after all, it is but the social worship of comparatively a few, while the minister of a smaller chapel in another town has a miserable, dwindling congregation, and thinks he does well if it reaches a hundred, although, perhaps, he preaches in a town where the population is reckoned by many thousands. We cannot reach the popular thought by these non-conforming churches, and shall not do so in spite of any heartiness we may put into the services, until we remove the established church, that is, the people's church, from the authority under which it is now in bondage. I know I am speaking against the current thought and preconceived notions of those who are here ; but my own experience is, that any beautiful chapels you may erect, any enthusiasm you may show, will not give you a chance of reaching the public ear, and no public worship you may hold will be worthy the name, until that is done. Therefore I say that I shall feel very dissatisfied with this Conference, if it separates without recording some protest against the Act of Uniformity which shuts persons of Unitarian views out of the national church ; for I tell you that, although I am a Unitarian, *that* is the church in which I should realise my highest conception of worship.

Mr. HERBERT NEW said :—I obey your call, Mr. Chairman, though I am extremely reluctant to attempt to add anything to-day to the most important subject which has been brought before us by the two papers of Mr. Hopps and Mr. Jeffery. I have made some slight contribution to this subject on a former occasion, and I am not disposed to change any of the opinions I then expressed as to the importance of the element of public worship in our churches, as to its relation to family worship, and to private worship, and as, in fact, to its essentiality to our very existence. But we have heard this matter partly discussed to-day as if it were an open question. Sir, to me it is not an open question, when I find myself going up to Liverpool, and now coming up to Birmingham, with hundreds of my fellow-worshippers, in that very capacity. We gathered together, last night, in the Church of the Saviour, where I remember the voice of my old friend, Mr. George Dawson ; and

if ever there was a church dedicated to public worship and the sincere worship of God, it is that church; if ever a saintly man made a contribution to the liturgies of English-speaking men, it was Mr. Dawson. Worship was the essence of that assembly, and is so, I trust, to-day. Our act last evening in that church was an act of worship. Our subsequent meeting at the Town Hall was an act of worship, and Mr. Armstrong, in his sermon, regarded us as worshipping people. As regards the addresses which have been read by Mr. Hopps and Mr. Jeffery, this morning, I know they will be printed, and am sure they will be read widely by those of our families and friends who are not able to be with us to-day, but whose hearts are with us, and who know that we do not come here with any idle efforts to discuss impossibilities, or to seek for what we have not got already, but are come as devout laymen and ministers, meeting and joining together in an act which, if it be not worship, I know not what it is. We cannot make our meeting-houses into mechanics' institutes, nor do we wish to. However small our body is at present, we rejoice that it is sincere. As regards the smallness of our number, I never lament these things; for I feel that, in spite of all, there is something in our midst which works for us, in our faithfulness to the highest objects of worship, and our relations to one another in the very highest acts of worship.

I have made no attempt to address you to-day; but I do rejoice to meet you. There are many here who have come in from other churches. They come, I am sure, for freedom of worship; and we welcome them as bringing devout hearts to the service. Why do men who feel the difficulty of their old dogmatic beliefs—why do they come to us? And young men, whom I am proud to know, will talk to me and tell me what is in their hearts, and ask me to find them a little work in a small fold. Why do they come to us? It is, as I say, for this element of worship—that they may, in perfect sincerity, join in a worship which is pure and simple, join in the worship of God in spite of the differences of religious opinion. And it is by these feelings of worship that these meetings will be actuated. We are met, conscious of spiritual power; and I hope we shall never raise any question again as to little details, when we have a common worship here which we do not measure by tens, but by hundreds. Let us not take up this tender flower of devotion, and pull it to pieces: it is growing; leave it reverently alone: minister to it in every way: it is filling our hearts with the incense of God, and is the very reason of our existence.

REV. W. CAREY WALTERS said:—I had no intention to speak on this subject this morning, but will just say one single word, and that is, that I feel quite sure that if the members of our churches who do not attend religious service regularly, will but remember the force of that thought which has been thrown out this morning, and will be prepared, temporarily, to sacrifice themselves, I shall be extremely surprised if, by-and-by, they do not, for their own sake, do what now they are willing to do for the sake of others. I have been spending a few weeks in Germany, where public worship is not much attended to. A gentleman there told me that he did not go to church, for he did not see the necessity of doing so. He

went to his office at nine o'clock in the morning, and returned home, each day, at nine o'clock at night. He had, therefore, no opportunity of doing anything very wrong during the week, because he was so engaged in business, and so he did not see any need of going to church on Sundays to confess his sins. But surely the sole object of public worship is not confession. There are men who feel they can ask God directly for the blessings which they need, and there are others who feel that it is in "the upward glancing of the eye," the upward effort of the soul, that worship consists. The objects of public worship are so many, that I really fail to see why people do not attend our services more than they do. I was very glad to hear the expression that Mr. Preston made use of:—that if, on one Sunday, he did not get anything to help him, he was good enough to remember that last Sunday he did meet with something which helped him. We have to minister to many varied necessities of life; and if, in the course of one Sunday's sermon, some of our members find that there is no spiritual food at all that helps them during the week, will they please remember that on some other Sunday the way was made clear which was dark to them before? And will the ministers remember that their chief duty is to help men and women, who are feeling the burden and battle of life almost too hard to bear and too difficult to fight; and try to be to their audiences the interpreters of the deepest things of the human heart, that amid the weary toil and work of their lives, these men and women may yet hold sweet communion with God?

Mr. J. GRAHAM said:—My only apology for speaking on this subject is, that it is one in which I take a very great interest indeed, and that, as I come from a considerable distance, it is well for you to know what we are thinking upon this subject in Scotland. I think this question of devotion is *the* question, above all other questions, which we ought to consider; for, in a church like ours, where we have complete liberty of thought, we cannot say that we find in our thoughts alone the real bond of union,—for we find in our thoughts the element of diversity. But it is when we come to the subject of our common devotion to great ideals that we find out our bond of union, and to cultivate this sense of devotion is the object for which we exist as a church. I think, at the same time, that there is no reason why we should be greatly alarmed or surprised at the condition of things to-day. I think that all around us the old order of things is passing away, and a new order of things is springing up. The old motives to public worship are becoming less powerful, and in many cases the old motives are allowed to depart before the new motives have sprung up. But the necessity which exists for public worship is shown in the very constitution of the human soul, and must come to the front and make itself felt. Worship exists in men and women in the emotions, and in all the senses, rising higher and higher towards God, as the sense of beauty rises into a conception of "the beauty of holiness." And these emotions cannot be argued into a person. We may talk about logic, but we cannot argue emotions into us. Emotion is of the very nature of music,—we must have the ear, the sense, the feeling for it; we cannot argue ourselves into it. But, although we cannot argue about it, we all know that it must be cultivated. We

can *train* that sense to a very great degree. By the attention of the child being drawn to the sense of music, the sense is cultivated, and it grows, until the child is filled with the love of music. A very good, common, and proper simile, also, is the simile of fire. As one spark may kindle a great fire, so one emotion in one soul may kindle it in many souls. And hence the advantage of public worship. Now these phases of religious emotion continue to be kindled in ourselves and others. Something has been said about "going to nature." I think there is a great deal to be learned from nature. When we see the beauty of the sky, and the fair loveliness of the earth, we do indeed rise into emotion. But then, our very feeling is that we long to express our emotion, and to share our feelings with our fellow-men; and out of this there grows the desire to meet in public worship, and a sense of sanctity in the love of nature that will make our lives beautiful. Thus I think that public worship is cultivated in us by the meditation that comes of our communion with nature. And I will also say, that we do not know any subject unless we spend some time in meditating upon it. Not until we have spent some time upon it, do we know what even the simplest idea means. Meditation is the very essential nature of prayer; meditation is the soul of true worship. So, to the very soul of the universe we may draw near, by meditation; and even closer still, by personal contact with souls who have been kindled, by meditation, into a sense of true worship. When we meet anyone who is above us in goodness, one who stands on higher ground than ourselves, we feel at once that there is something in goodness which is infectious; and in this sense of the infectiousness of goodness, we realise the beauty of public worship. So there is nothing to alarm or distress us in the state of things which now exists, but every reason for hope. I think we clearly see the passing away of the lower motive, and the coming in of the higher motive. Instead of our congregations dwindling away, I think men will attend more and more to public worship, and find in the new motive a great stimulus to it. Our own duty, meanwhile, is to give free and natural expression to our thoughts and feelings. I think that those who entertain a strong feeling for public worship, should never hesitate to say so. I see no reason to alarm ourselves. A new development is going on in our churches, and I am quite satisfied that if we just do our part, that development will go on and progress, until our churches become more and more a power in this land.

Rev. J. E. ODGERS, M.A., said:—I want to go back to a speech you have already heard, and a statement made by at least two speakers. I want to know if it is true that we ministers are, to some extent, putting away the devotional element in our services, and hashing up for our congregations the dry bones of forgotten controversies? I really am feeling that if this is a true charge, we ought to take it very seriously to heart. Generally speaking, what I fear is, that we are apt to make too light of the old battles which our forefathers fought. I take shame to myself that I have been twenty years in the ministry, and my Unitarian controversial sermons amount to one and a half. With one heart and one soul, to-day we are commending to ourselves the one element of worship. It is perfectly true that

ours is a devotion which cannot be forced ; which will not always grow up against the trellis-work that you may fix it to, or run in the channels that you may dig for it. But there is this : we are in the present day thinking, perchance, that this emotion, because it comes and goes, because it ebbs and flows, is a thing which we can well let alone to take care of itself. If it will come, come it will. But, my friends, though, as every new generation that is born into this world has this religious faculty, this yearning of the soul towards God ; though our children will have, as we have had, the sense of sinking through the earth they live on into the Everlasting Arms ; though they know the feeling of occasional faith, of yearning and uplifting, still, if these things are represented to them as something very nice, something which has had to do with a good deal of the poetry which has been written, and which has been the motive of a good deal of the world's literature ; as something which is to a certain extent within the sphere of æsthetics, and comparable to music or art as an element of culture, why, we simply come down to this,—that the keen intellect, the growing critical power in them will disparage the emotion of the moment of devotion ; that when a man is, as he sometimes thinks, “at his best,” because he is at his keenest and his sharpest, he will regard this emotion, as Dr. Martineau has said, as something which has a good deal of nice feeling about it, but no truth in it. It is admitted that we have to build up to the clearest light that we can get ; that we have to give our people the best reasoning we can give them and the best knowledge that we can obtain, of a solid, calm kind, regarding the history of mankind and the history of our race ; I add, that we have, as far as we can, to give our children some logical foundation for the worship which we ask them to render. We want clear thinking and clear speaking on this matter too. If they go without this ; if they pass through our worship, if they come in contact with the souls of others, simply to go their own ways, and feel themselves that their emotion was but a transitory thing, that they have lived through it, what happens ? Why, they are really destitute of one faculty of interpretation. As they read the history of their race, there will be chapters in the history of man, heights of view which will be forever closed against them. For want of this training, they will go forth with an eye that ought to recognise the divine in nature, art, poetry, music, but will see nothing. Let us take away from this discussion the thought of devotional culture as a guiding line, to be remembered for pulpit ministrations and Sunday services.

MR. HARRIS said :—With reference to what one gentleman understood Mr. Hopps to say,—that we do not worship God when we wander in the fields—I do not think Mr. Hopps intended to convey any such thought as that. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” but to whom do they declare it ? To the seeing eye, to the understanding heart, to the aspiring soul ; and I do not think that anyone to whom they do declare it in that way would venture to assert that it was not necessary to attend public worship. Those to whom the heavens appeal will want to commune with their fellow-men, and want them to worship too, and will feel that it is pressingly necessary to have public worship. It is not at all necessary to impress upon an

audience such as this the importance of public worship, but there is a growing necessity to impress upon our congregations the importance of their attendance on public worship. I do not think anyone who is well acquainted with them, can deny the fact, that their deliverance from the old idea that it was a necessity to attend public worship for the sake of their souls, has tended to make them less alive to the absolute necessity of it on other grounds; and I think that one of the key-notes—of which there are very many—was struck by the gentleman who suggested that we should turn our attention to teach our *young* people the necessity of personal devotion, as I think that would be one of the greatest helps that could be made towards the maintenance of public worship.

The Rev. CYRIL GREAVES, M.A., D.C.L., said:—I have been a Unitarian only two years; but though I used to be told that “little boys should be seen and not heard,” yet, perhaps, in my two years’ experience I may know some things better than those who have been born within the fold. I belonged at one time to the Episcopal Church, by law established. Mr. Lake, of Warwick, to whom I am indebted for some new thought, speaks about the great difficulty which Unitarians have experienced in all places, large and small, owing to the great established churches being everywhere, and friends preferring to attend these churches where there is a very large communion and great fellowship, to being at their own place of worship. This is a fact. I think the reason why there are so many Trinitarians is, that they take care to ingrain into the minds of young people the various things which they call truths. Prayers are put up to the Son of God, and to what they call Three Persons in One God. Though I propose that subscription to that church should be relaxed, yet I believe that many would be in that National Church now if they could conscientiously be there. But then, what is to be done? We have heard a great deal about our body becoming smaller, of our public worshippers dropping away, that our members do not come to church, and that in small places it is almost impossible to keep going at all. If you take up the Unitarian Almanack, you will see that many of the little places are marked “shut,” and that others might be marked “as bad as shut.” Now, our Unitarian body is the richest of all denominations, unless it is the society of friends called Quakers. And don’t you think that those who are so well blessed ought to support largely their poorer brethren? In noble churches like this, if the clergymen cannot get a congregation together, it must be their faults. Don’t you think that some sort of work might be done? Don’t you think that every town with a population, say, of fifteen thousand, might have a little church kept up as a protest against the Christolatry, the Polytheism which prevails? I have nothing to urge concerning the great places; I pray only for Christ’s poor sheep, who are scattered up and down this naughty world.

The Conference then adjourned for luncheon.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

THE Conference reassembled at Three o'clock. Mr. Frederic Nettlefold, of London, had kindly accepted the invitation of the Committee to act as Chairman; but having been advised to remain indoors, owing to a severe attack of rheumatism, had been reluctantly compelled to give up the duty.

In his absence, C. H. JAMES, Esq., M.P., was called to the chair. The hymn commencing "Sovereign and transforming grace," was then sung, and Mr. James opened the proceedings with the following brief remarks:—

I am quite sure that none has cause more to regret the absence of Mr. Nettlefold than myself. However, I am happy to think that the task of presiding over this meeting is not a very onerous one, and that I may possibly get through it. But I have to remind our friends, if they will allow me, that, as I see our meeting has to end at 5.30, the time for discussion will necessarily be very limited. I have great pleasure in calling upon Mr. Picton to read his paper.

Mr. J. ALLANSON PICTON then read the following paper on

THE INFLUENCE UPON RELIGION OF THE MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRITICAL AND RATIONAL SPIRIT.

By the critical and rational spirit I understand the disposition to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. But as the use of apostolic words may be confusing, because the men most averse to a critical and rational spirit feel most bound to adopt them, I will farther explain the sense I attribute to those words. We prove, or test all things when we insist, wherever possible, on verification, or, if verification should, in the nature of the case, be impossible, when we accept only such proof as would satisfy us in the ordinary affairs of life. The principles of religion can only be verified by practising them, and noting how they work. The facts alleged by religious books or churches must be tested precisely in the same manner as the assertions of Herodotus or Marco Polo. The critical and rational spirit flatly refuses to allow the

adoption of two standards of proof, one for religious history and doctrine, the other for secular history and doctrine. The consequences involved in this are too obvious to the present assembly to need statement ; it is only to avoid misunderstanding that I have said so much on the meaning of the terms used.

The same object requires one other word. By "the modern development" of the spirit and temper just described, I understand, not the improvement of its methods, but its growth and spread among the people at large within the range of our own experience. If, for the sake of convenience, I am required to name a *terminus a quo*, I should take the publication of Strauss's "Life of Jesus." This goes back beyond the personal reckoning of most here ; but the palpable results of that epoch-making event were not extensively felt in England until a period that all of middle age can remember very well. Renan's "Vie de Jésus," Darwin's "Origin of Species," and Colenso's "Pentateuch," works of very unequal value, all marked by their enormous sale the rapid spread of the critical and rational spirit. If any one who has survived half a century now looks back to the religious world as it was at the period of his twenty-first birthday, he must recognise that he has lived through a period of upheaval and denudation, compared with which Luther's reformation was a mere landslip.

The most familiar illustration of the range and rapidity of this movement is to be found in the contents of popular magazines, and even of religious newspapers. For, without expressing any opinion on the scholarship of publishers and editors, I may safely assert that they are usually shrewd judges of what will pay. And the fact that a moderate display of the critical and rational spirit has now become essential to the success of magazines which find their market among the pious middle-class, is quite sufficient to mark the enormous change that has taken place within living memory. Thirty years ago there was a strong line of demarcation between secular and religious periodical literature. The one, for the most part, carefully eschewed theology, or only took cognisance of it when applause could be won by vindicating the worldly wisdom of the Anglican *via media*. As to religious magazines and newspapers, the reputation they most coveted was that of defenders of the faith. The struggles of the *Westminster Review*, and other humbler ventures of the same kind, only go to confirm these remarks.

But now, how different is the state of things! Not only do the three chief monthlies find it practically safe and even profitable to dabble in heresy, but the most widely-circulated religious newspaper of the day is distinguished by the frankness with which it treats every question affecting the relation of theological dogma to scientific discovery or historic research. As to the popular magazines, one case speaks volumes, and the mere mention of it will save the accumulation of instances. In the current number of the *Contemporary Review*, a magazine specially guaranteed *virginibus puerisque* by the well-known character both of editor and proprietors, we find the most distinguished satirist of religious schism quietly appealing to the good sense of his readers to abandon the miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, together with the prospect of a Day of Judgment, on the ground that they are hindrances rather than helps to religion. Now, this and similar magazines are not addressed specially to readers of a negative and faithless temper. On the contrary, the vast majority of their readers are not only regular attendants on public worship, but more or less devout and active members of churches. Unless the critical and rational spirit had spread very considerably amongst them, we may be sure that the appearance of articles like "A Comment on Christmas" in their favourite magazine would not be as welcome to them as it evidently is. I think, therefore, I need say no more in illustration of what I mean by the "modern development of a critical and rational spirit."

It is natural that even the most candid and courageous advocates of devoutness and faith should feel a little anxiety in view of this remarkable movement in opinion. And to the question, What is likely to be its influence on religion? no satisfactory answer can be given which does not allow for a much farther advance and wider spread of the same spirit.

We cannot, with any sense of permanence, content ourselves with showing the harmlessness of the very moderate rationalism prevalent just now. The time at my disposal does not allow me to give reasons, and I must limit myself to the observation, that the same influences which have led to a very general abandonment of the six days of creation, and of the legend of Eden, are quite capable of eliminating all miracle whatever, and all supernatural revelation from popular belief. Whether that will universally happen or not, is not now the question. It is pretty certain

to occur very widely, and we are asking ourselves what will be the influence on religion. Suppose a whole generation regarding Christianity as a purely natural incident in human evolution, will they on that account be wholly without saving faith? It may be said that it is impossible to judge until the time comes. But I venture to think that we are not wholly without the means of forming an opinion now.

It is notorious that there are, in almost all churches at the present day, a considerable number of members who have abandoned every shred of belief in miracle or supernatural revelation in the ordinary sense, but who still worship with their old associates, and do not feel it necessary even to turn Unitarian. Observe, I am not speaking of ministers or clergymen, but only of ordinary attendants on religious worship. Unitarians always expect to get hold of these people. They even think they have a natural right to them, and are disposed to make charges of disingenuousness or cowardice, because their expectations are not fulfilled. But there is no reason for such complaints. The change that has come over these people is not a conversion to Unitarianism, but the development of a spiritual agnosticism to which all creed-framed theologies are equally meaningless, and all real worship equally inspiring. I knew very well one of these people, who, so far from being attracted to Unitarianism by his critical and rational development, was only drawn away from his own sect by a preference for Methodist fervour. The reason is very plain. These spiritual agnostics have so entirely abandoned all hope of enlightenment about the ultimate ontological mysteries of the Universe, that they feel a resentment against preachers who bother them with an abandoned puzzle. But, on the other hand, there are none more grateful for a word that touches the heart with a human sympathy, or deepens reverence, or humbles pride, or inspires with the temper of Christ.

If I may speak from a tolerably intimate knowledge of some typical cases of the kind, the people who have passed through this experience are singularly unconscious of any moral or spiritual change at all commensurate with the intellectual difference between their earlier and their later beliefs. In fact, even the intellectual difference does not appear to themselves so great as it does to unsympathising critics. But of that I may say a word presently. At any rate, their religious affections are very much what they were when first awakened in early years. If they then

betook themselves to St. Thomas á Kempis, they find his pages no less refreshing now. If they then found some of Wesley's hymns fit music for the Holy of Holies within them, it is only a few needlessly coarse notes that strike any discord now. If their hearts then glowed at the fervent though ungrammatical aspirations of an unlettered brother after a better life, they do not find the least decay of such susceptibility now. And if they are compelled to keep themselves at a distance, it is only out of respect for the painful suspicions entertained by the unlettered brother concerning them. Of course, they have come to regard faith as a spiritual affection of loyalty to the best ideal known, and not in the least degree as a belief of facts or assertions. But they maintain that this was the essence of faith even in the teaching of St. Paul, though they allow that in his epistles intellectual processes and moral affections are not always kept distinct. But holding to the moral significance of faith as the only effective part of its confused connotation in old times, they find that in regard to the essentials of religion, Faith, Hope, and Charity, they are very much where they were in the days of their evangelical fervour.

I am well aware of all the objections that may be made, first, against the soundness of the position occupied by this admittedly exceptional class, and next, against the probability of any wide extension of their experience in coming generations. As far as the narrow limits imposed on me will allow, I will try to sum up, in a few concluding words, the considerations which appear to me to outweigh those objections. These people say that their practical and regulative ideas of God, Christ, and the Bible are proved, in their experience, to be quite sufficient for the needs of life. Now, if this is so, *solvitur ambulando*, and such experience, when real, generally proves to be catching. It is not a sufficient objection to show that the practical and regulative ideas left us do not solve the mysteries of human destiny. Of course they do not. But these spiritual agnostics say that such a solution of mysteries is no part of the work of religion. It is for philosophy to do that—if it can. The business of religion is not to give intellectual light, but moral strength and purity; not to enable us to understand the working of the universe, but to make us consciously, by unreserved loyalty of soul, contented cogs in the infinite machine. Spiritual agnostics, therefore, do not care in the least for the taunt that they explain nothing. They carry much farther than

the old evangelicals their protest against the pride of intellect. In fact, what they chiefly find fault with in these old evangelicals is the spurious rationalism which pretends to declare "the whole counsel of God."

What, then, it may be asked, are those practical and regulative ideas of God, and Christ, and the Bible, that are left to us? The author of "Natural Religion" has well said that no man can be without a theology, though he may not call it by that name. We are so constituted that temporary existence is unthinkable without eternal being as a background; for we cannot imagine anything arising out of nothing. Whether we choose to call the everlasting by the name of God or not, we cannot think it away. And if we identify it with the universe, there remains that transcendent attribute of unity to which science bears increasing testimony, and which, when we try to realise it, sways the soul with an overwhelming awe. Many sufficient reasons have been given why we should give up this God or that; and, with reverence be it spoken, the God of the earliest Christian congregations is not in all points the God of Christian congregations now. But no reason of any avail has ever been given why we should sever ourselves from the innermost life of humanity by wholly surrendering a name which, amidst ten thousand variations, always keeps a central significance of eternal being, authority, and power. As Mr. Herbert Spencer has shown, the evolution of the idea of God exhibits a continuity, from the beginning to the end, in its retention of an indestructible instinct of kinship between the bottomless mystery within and the measureless mystery without. Aratus conceived of God in one way, and St. Paul in another, and our ideas are necessarily different from both; but there is a meaning for us all in the words that "we are His offspring." Before we were, He is. Of Him we are, as are all created things. He is that unity of power which co-ordinates innumerable forces to make the laws of nature and of life. The thought of Him stimulates the reverence which makes loyalty to universal law a holy obedience and a joy. Whatever has been said of God and His ways that science or historic criticism can disprove, we readily surrender. To do otherwise would be disloyalty to Him. We cannot picture Him as He is. But we picture Him as we can; for the visible universe is the skirt of His garment, and the experience of mankind is His partial revelation, the growing interpretation of the for-ever unknowable. And His worship draws us out of self into the better life of sympathy and loyalty.

I have spoken of the experience of mankind as His partial revelation. I cannot pursue the subject, but can only speak of the one conspicuous illustration which makes us Christians. How shall a man best live in the thought of God? Christ is the answer. But it is said that the picture of Christ is unhistorical. How far that is the case I cannot argue now. We have very good ground for believing that the loveliest features are historical enough for all practical purposes. But however that may be, the picture is there. It is the reflection of a life where self is dissolved in two strong, holy passions—loyalty to God and love to man. And that life expresses itself in words and deeds that are an immortal inspiration. I am told that many of the deeds are evidently distorted by imagination, for they are miracles, and miracles never occurred. Be it so. I am rather glad of it; for it removes one difficulty in the way of imitation. But the thought will arise that this very distortion suggests the transcendent mastery of a spirit whose deeds straightway transformed themselves into miracles in the memory of survivors. At any rate, the luminous simplicity, the strange, searching power of the words recorded, the far-reaching ideal they suggest, and the large-hearted love manifested in the deeds described, together form a picture which represents a very incarnation of that vague dream of a kinship or unity between God and man, which, according to Mr. Herbert Spencer, has haunted all human thought. This is a vision which the critical and rational spirit can as little mar as the theory of optics can degrade a rainbow. The words of the Sermon on the Mount drop on the ear with no less ecstasy, the Parables touch the heart with no less longing, the tragedy of Calvary burns into the soul with no less conviction, and self-reproach, and kindling purifying sympathy, than when we were unreasoning children. Baseness, falsehood, cowardice, spite, pride, and greed dissolve away in this contemplation:—

“ When once thou visitest the heart,
 Then truth begins to shine,
 Then earthly vanities depart,
 Then kindles love divine.”

Similarly the whole Bible is to be judged as to its religious value, not by the amount of historical or philosophic truth it contains, nor yet to be condemned for its scientific errors; but it is to be taken for precisely what it is found to be worth by souls needing inspiration. The foolish

insistance of the Church on the Book's infallibility has bred the equally silly spirit of carping, which triumphs in the exposure of Jewish superstitions, and of inaccuracies in the apostolic writers. Others, again, have falsified the argument from experience, by inferring historic truth from power of edification. Now, power of edification can be tested by experience; but historic truth cannot. Many of the Psalms will ring like a trumpet through the souls of living men as long as the world lasts. But to argue from this that the Mosaic cosmogony must be true is, of course, ridiculous.

No; the reason why we love the Bible is that, as Coleridge used to say of some books, "*it finds us.*" When it ceases to do that we will give it up. We do not in the least deny the spiritual value and power of other sacred collections which have also crystallised, for later ages, the previously vague and diffused spiritual experience of the race. But for us, with our antecedents, and in our stage of the world-wide evolution, the Bible, and most conspicuously, the ministry of Christ, are richest in inspiration, most searching in conviction, and most mighty in redemption from evil. The critical and rational spirit may deal as it will with the causes of the phenomenon. But, when all is said, the New Testament remains for us the holiest portal by which we approach to worship the Eternal.

The discussion on this paper was opened by Mr. GEO. ST. CLAIR, F.G.S., as follows:—

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I feel that discussions should be conducted like games of chess, in which one may pause and consider before he follows with a move. Being obliged to follow at once, I do it somewhat blindly, and to-morrow's reflection will show me how I ought to have proceeded.

Mr. Picton, yielding to science and criticism, surrenders all miracles and abandons the whole supernatural. This leaves the region of the Unknowable, concerning which we must all be Agnostics; but it establishes the standard of natural law for the judgment of such questions as creation and incarnation, and it compels a verdict adverse to special divine interpositions in Jewish history. The Bible is recognised as a human literature, and the former times did not differ from these in respect of access to God, revelations from him, or government of the world by him. Pestilences were not sent as judgments for sin, the dead were not really raised; and, in short, the supernatural atmosphere of those days is dissipated.

Well, what then? The Hebrews must have had some basis for their religion. The original basis was their knowledge and ideas of nature, of human nature, and

the Author of both. Religion may be defined as the attitude of soul and the course of conduct becoming and proper towards God and man, in view of our knowledge of nature and human nature and the Author of both. This basis remains to us, and is even enlarged by the science which has destroyed miracles ;—we need not regard these things as an abandoned puzzle—we might expect religion to be more firmly established among us now than in the days of old. And I venture to think that the proper effect of the rational and critical spirit is seen in men like Leigh Hunt, who cultivated the Religion of the Heart ; in James Martineau's Endeavours after the Christian Life ; in George Dawson's Sermons of Charity and Prayers of child-like trust ; and (may I not add ?) in Mr. Picton's own devoutness. But I must say that Agnosticism does not suffice for me. If we are to view God as Herbert Spencer does, as possessing neither intelligence nor will nor love, but as a sort of underlying substratum of all things, about which we can know nothing—I could as soon worship the North Pole ! My worship must be based on what I know, and not upon what I don't know. It must be founded on God's existence, his power and providence and bounty. Certainly Mr. Picton seems to see these in Jesus Christ. I see them in nature too.

Rationalism is consistent with devoutness. Some have found it so ; and, as Mr. Picton says, *solvitur ambulando*. But this legitimate effect has not had time to establish itself widely, and the first result of the new spirit and the new knowledge is often unfortunate. It is not every person who, after being trained in the belief that Revelation comes from without, can see a sufficiency of revelation in natural theology. It is not every mind which can accept the Evolution theory and yet believe that God created man. Their first conclusion is rather likely to be that since the Bible is not infallible, it is no guide at all, and since the world is not governed as the Hebrews thought it was, the world is not divinely governed at all.

The result is seen in the yielding of the mind, more or less, to Agnosticism, and of the life to Secularism. Prayer is given up because “perhaps there is no God to hear it,” and again, because the reign of law shows that prayer cannot alter anything. They take the advice of George Eliot, and try to be their own providence. Rational religious teaching would bid them both labour and pray ; put their shoulder to the wheel and call upon Jupiter too ; but the effect on some is that they cease to call on Jehovah at all. When they succeed in their efforts and enterprises they praise themselves, or call it good fortune. Whether they experience success or failure, there is no providence in it. Consequently, when in distress, they are without the consolations of religion. They have no expectation of a divine hand to be stretched down to lift them out of many waters. There is no meaning to them in the Psalmist's words—“God is my rock and my fortress.” In calamity they cannot show Christian resignation ; and the best they say when the final summons comes, is—“Let me die the death of the Stoic, and let my last end be like his.”

The mind being in an agnostic frame, the spirit will find it difficult to worship, even if the house of worship continue to be attended. If, perhaps, there is no God, and no divine government of the world, not only is prayer useless, but praise becomes

impossible. The Bible, not being infallible, is looked upon as antiquated ; and all its doctrines are imagined to be baseless, because not specially revealed.

One lamentable result of the rational teaching (so misunderstood) appears to be a disregard of the Sabbath and a loosening of the motives for attending church. All over the country we hear, with regard to the Free Churches, and Unitarian Churches, that the members do not fill their seats, though for the present they may pay their rents. Their justification to themselves I conjecture to be this,—We have learned that the Bible is a human book, and the Ten Commandments were not written with the literal finger of God, but were framed by Moses. The reason for keeping the Sabbath is not “God spake these words and said,” but because rest and quiet and meditation and worship are found to be pleasant and beneficial. The Sabbath was made for man, and “We may do what we find to be best for ourselves.” This is not untrue as doctrine, but see how it is misunderstood and wrested to wrong uses ! What is expedient and good is judged by the standard of worldly convenience and material advantage, and not by the wants of the spirit. If we were guided by the needs of the soul we should continue to attend public worship, and should jealously guard ourselves from sinking the soul and sinking the day to a worldly level. I know, of course, that Francis William Newman has said he finds public worship a hindrance to his soul ; and I do not forget that so good a man as Milton did not go to church. But it is presumption for ordinary persons and little, common souls, to justify their neglect by these examples, especially if the hours be spent in a less devout and profitable way.

Instead of spending the time more profitably than at church, what are the facts among our church members ? The natural man feels an inclination to bodily ease, a superfine sensitiveness against getting damp in a shower, a desire to enjoy the air of the country, a dislike of going the same road through the town that he goes all other days of the week. He persuades his conscience. But it all means that the place of worship is losing its attraction because he is less spiritually minded, and he is daring enough to do as he does because he now thinks the Sabbath has no divine sanction, and there are no awful judgments for Sabbath-breakers.

Another important result of rational inquiry is, to show that the doctrine of a deep-seated hell of fire is a heathen myth. Consequently the dread of the future world dies away (and the relief from this incubus is certainly one of the greatest benefits which rational theology confers). But observe the unfortunate effect of this new gospel on the minds of some. They argue, practically, “There is nothing to fear after death. There will not be a day when the angels will bind sinners in bundles to be burned. So the Judgment Day need not be taken into account.” We try to make it understood that the Nemesis of natural consequence follows with inevitable tread, and that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. But they think they have had experience of natural results—that they are not so very bad—and that they can afford to risk a little more in that way.

The effect of all this upon that part of practical religion which consists in keeping

the second of Christ's two great commandments threatens to be bad. Hell being a myth, and heaven a peradventure, what remains but Secularism? which is too likely to become selfishness, defending its course as being like nature's own law of self-preservation, and struggle against rivals. Christ's law of mercy will not be felt binding, any more than the teetotal pledge of Father Matthew.

All this, be it observed, I regard as error of practice and declension of feeling, following upon removal of the miraculous, but only following because of the wrong inference that we are left without God and divine providence. Yet I think I see it operating. It shows (very curiously) just what orthodoxy shows—an inability to believe in a religion without miracles.

We may hope, however, that the evil is only temporary. We may think so because it comes from wrong inference, and the right inference will surely assert itself in time.

We seem to see why the evil afflicts us at present. The Hebrew supernatural basis of religion has only lately been removed: the new natural basis has not yet won the confidence which it deserves. We are truly in a transition. Our present generation of church members were trained in comparative orthodoxy, and having got shaken as by an earthquake, have not found *terra firma* since. They were educated in erroneous traditions, instead of in the facts and truths of nature and human nature. Finding that their education misled them, they can now trust nothing else.

The moral is, give rational teaching to the young, and it will be true again that if you train up a child in the way it should go, when it is old it will not depart from it. Let Rationalism and Criticism prepare the basis for them, showing them what is true concerning God and the Bible, Nature and Man, and what is proper and becoming in feeling and conduct, in view of the facts and truths established; and we may hope to see our children in the happy possession of a religious nature as warm and earnest as that of any Catholic saint or Evangelical devotee.

The Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY said:—There is no time left to make a speech, so that I shall confine myself to the one point that I wish to make a few remarks upon. Our friend Mr. Picton began his most admirable paper with the expression of a fear that he was out of place. Now, though he understands that this is an annual meeting of Unitarians, it really is a meeting, held triennially, of those who believe in a Church of God in which there shall be no mortal creed; in which there shall be fair room and full scope for the development of the line of thought Mr. Picton himself adopts; in which, therefore, he has a fair home—a fair, honest, honourable home—as much as those who do not follow the same line of thought as he does. This Conference represents a church in which we strive to teach the great sanctities of duty and love, and desire to show our faith in God by our dealings with our fellow-creatures, by the cherishing of boundless hopes, and with the frankest investigation of ancient records, and the bravest rejection of them if found to be no longer consistent with our enlightened knowledge. Though Mr. Picton is no Unitarian, yet there are a great many Unitarians

who very much agree with Mr. Picton ; and therefore, in the churches which are represented by this Conference, there is no refusal of a home to such as believe as he ; who are full of the love of God and man, and of admiration for the life of Christ, which was one of holy service and reverence. These are indeed our brothers, in heart and soul. I think there may be some misunderstanding, however, and I am desirous of setting it right on both sides. I believe that in the group of churches represented by this Conference, those who believe in miracles and those who do not have an equal home. I refuse to make a critical question a religious question, recognising that whatever may be my view upon it, I may still have a mean and wrongful heart, or a warm and noble one : I may reject every miracle whatever and be a devout lover of God and my neighbour, or I may receive all miracles, and I may fail in that love and lose that reverence. We, therefore, distinctly discriminate between religion and criticism. The one other thought I will add is this, that I believe equally with Mr. Picton, and with equal firmness, that it is perfectly possible to reject all these records of miracle, perfectly possible to carry to the uttermost in theology every scientific principle, and yet to feel the intensest reverence for the life of Christ, and yet to have the strongest possible conviction of our duty to the Eternal Power under whom we live, and to gather together in solemn worship for the culture of that reverence and the cherishing of that ideal. So that, Sir, to my mind, modern critical investigations, so far from interfering with religion, so far from being agencies that threaten faith, shaking it at its foundations, are re-establishing it on a firmer basis. When men, however, mistake criticism for religion, then religion loses something of its power. When men turn to the history of a miracle, and say, "There is a religious act," there is so much taken away from the energy of devotion to those principles which are distinctly and emphatically religious. In times past, what power religious faith has had ! what infinite power in establishing things which, it seems to me, will pass like shadows ! Why, the power of this intense religious faith, inwoven in our natures, has had an enormous control over the lives of men and nations, subjugating them as slaves to the authority of tyrannic hierarchies ! That power religion must no longer exert : no longer must it prop up our social and political corruptions. Religion has also had power to elaborate the most intricate and subtle articles of dogmatic faith. We cannot disguise the subtlety, the intellectual energy, of this strange critical dogmatism that has made itself manifest in Christendom ; but it must no longer be confounded with religion. Take that power which has been spent in upbuilding hierarchies, take that power which has been spent in evolving human creeds ; fling that power of religion upon removing the corruption, the ignorance, the sin, of men and nations ; no longer let it be spent as it has been, but fling it on the bright humanities of life. Such is the meaning of the real life and example of Christ, and the simple faith that he taught.

The CHAIRMAN said :—I could not help feeling the remark of our friend Mr. Picton, about each man being a cog in a machine. I am not a cog ; I won't be a cog : I am a little machine of my own. I think, I feel, and I act for myself ; and I don't think

that is quite consistent with being a cog in a machine. I put it to any one of you, or you may put it to yourselves—do you feel, any of you, that you are anything like a cog in a machine? Have you not rather something to strive for by yourself, for yourself, and on behalf of other people? Why, that is what we have to do in this world ;—to be ourselves ; thinking, working, acting people, entering our protest on behalf and in the behoof of the world.

At the call of the Chairman, the Rev. PHILIP H. WICKSTEED, M.A., read the following paper on

A NEW MAGAZINE OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND SCHOLARSHIP.

THE Free Churches of England stand committed by their whole history to religious veracity. Free thought is a condition of spiritual health which they have always realised, more or less distinctly, as essential ; but *veracity of utterance* in word and deed is the principle to which they have been martyrs. This is the “ark of the covenant” which has been entrusted to their keeping, and by their fidelity to which they stand or fall. This veracity—with its necessary conditions of open trusts and elastic organisation—is the golden thread that makes our otherwise changing and variegated history a single whole.

But veracity of utterance is impossible without definite beliefs and distinct ideas ; by which I do not mean precise definitions of the undefinable, and light-hearted comprehension of the incomprehensible, but beliefs which definitely assert something—whether vague or precise—and definitely deny what is opposite to or inconsistent with it ; and ideas which, if not always clean cut at the circumference, are at least well focussed at the centre, and do not mistake themselves for their opposites.

Therefore the trust laid upon us, now as ever, is to cultivate definite beliefs and distinct ideas on religious matters, based not upon tradition, but upon the thoughts and experiences of the living present,—in the creation and control of which the still living past plays its sacred part,—and to give these definite beliefs and distinct ideas veracious utterance in the forms and substance of our religious life. And since the condition of veracity is loyalty to our principle of trusting to organic growth from within, not to artificial docking and squeezing from without, the method by which we must pursue our ends and discharge ourselves of our trust is determined for us. We cannot form and issue collective creeds, but

we can severally cultivate and express individual convictions formed in contact with and under the influence of the minds of others to whom we are united in work and worship by common sympathies and a common allegiance. And whenever, as must sometimes be the case, any one of us is led to think and work along lines which diverge so far from those followed by his companions as practically no longer to enter into one system with them, he will simply drop out of our line of advance without reproach and without bitterness on either side, seeking his natural allies, and finding his natural centre of allegiance elsewhere. Whereas those of us who still remain within touch of each other will contribute each in his degree to the general advance, not by weak compromise and unvarious self-repression, but by throwing his strength into the definite formation and distinct utterance of thoughts which are his own, and which, in virtue of their definiteness and distinctness, will be able to combine with those of others, and help to determine the resultant direction along which the general change and consolidation of our beliefs will take place, and by which the general "orientation" of our forms of worship will be constantly readjusted.

Free thought unaccompanied by this definiteness of conception and veracity of utterance must have deplorable results. It leads to the contented acceptance of worn-out symbols, and to the deep and fatal scepticism resulting from their habitual use. When men allow themselves to repeat formulæ and perform acts—in a word, to use symbols—which have a traditional sanctity, but which they feel to be without *intrinsic* significance, appropriateness, or present truth, it is inevitable that religious faith should be undermined by subtly corrosive influences. Liberality and enlightenment, under these conditions, necessarily involve a growing carelessness as to religious *veracity*, and this in its turn a growing indifference and scepticism as to religious *truth*. A more or less vague sentiment is all that is left of religion, and the best intellect and warmest feeling of the community, though perhaps tolerating and even encouraging the organised expression of the religious life, will cease genuinely to support, inspire, or guide it.

I can hardly think that these dangers will appear imaginary to any of my hearers. It is surely not true that our own times are wanting in religious earnestness; and it is not without reason that we perpetually

congratulate ourselves on the growing liberality of all the churches; but the other side of the medal is an increasing carelessness as to veracity, an increasing desire to shirk the responsibility of forming distinct ideas and definite beliefs, an increasing willingness to use worn-out symbols without ever fairly facing the question whether they any longer symbolise anything, and if they do, whether we any longer believe or wish to express that which they symbolise. We cannot play fast and loose with the truth in this way, and already the time seems within measurable distance when, as a penalty for its unverity, the religious world of England may wake to find that it has been cheating itself with words behind which there were no realities, and that its holy of holies is a neglected lumber room.

If there is any degree of truth in what I have advanced, then the hour has come at which our Free Churches must show whether they are capable of rising to the height of their calling, or whether, weighed in the balance at this crisis of the religious life of England, they shall be found wanting.

Let me, then, very briefly touch upon one or two great subjects in which, as it appears to me, we are in danger of drifting towards a position at once vague and unveracious, in which it will be impossible for us to retain our spiritual honour or to defend our sacred trust.

Amongst the most prominent of the "symbols" of religious life amongst us is the Bible. Will anyone venture to deny the danger of the position of the Bible becoming a matter of tradition, and being smitten with unverity and unreality? Some thirty years ago ministers and laymen alike knew what they were at with the Bible. Both alike had studied it, and had studied it along the same lines and with the same interests. They were *within touch* of each other; and the Bible reading or exposition was a vital and refreshing portion of the religious services, the meaning of which, alike in its main scope and in its smallest details, was perfectly definite and perfectly well understood.

What shall I say of the present time? Shall I say that laymen have ceased to read, and that ministers have ceased to study the Bible? That all alike have abandoned their old position towards it, but that none have been at the pains to define and occupy a new one? That, possession being nine points of law, it still, for the most part, occupies its old place externally, but that few ministers or laymen would have any clear

answer to give if challenged to say *why* it occupies that position? That, as intelligent sympathy with the meaning of this part of the service declines, the choice of lessons becomes more and more contracted, though it still includes passages of Johannine and Pauline theology which minister and congregation only half understand, and—did they but know it—much less than half believe? Shall I say, in fine, that the Bible retains a purely traditional position, in which it is held by waning associations which are losing their intelligence even more rapidly than their strength, and which will soon leave it high and dry, a shrivelled fetish retained in its place, not by the force of belief, but by the insincerity and indifference of a disbelief too sceptical as to truth to care to sweep error away?

Or shall I say that our changed attitude towards the Bible has at once widened and deepened our sympathies? That our final and complete emancipation from slavery to it has awakened us for the first time to its full grandeur? That it no longer retains a protected and artificial place, but occupies the leading—not exclusive—position in our religious life and worship, which its historical influence and its inherent power naturally vindicate for it? That intelligent study is gradually unlocking treasures hitherto unsuspected in it? That the dream of destruction is giving way to the reconstruction of a lost but now rediscovered history? That the Gospel of Jesus is at last beginning to be understood and to throw its light upon the way of the nations, while the Pauline and Johannine theologies with which it is linked in the New Testament are recognised at once in their truth and their error, in their relation to the times that shaped them, to the principles that inspired them, and to the changed conceptions of our own age?

I do not believe that either of these pictures could be drawn with truth to-day, but I believe that one or other of them will be true some few years hence. Which shall it be?

From the Bible the transition to theology is natural. We no longer think that all theological questions can be decided by "texts." Does it follow that they cannot be decided at all, that they are not worth deciding, or that they can be decided off-hand by a little common sense, and need no thought or study? The threatened decay of theology amongst us appears to me to demand grave attention. The doctrines of the trinity,

the eternal sonship and the incarnation, of predestination and election, of salvation by faith, of the atonement, of the fall, of eternal torment, meant something. What did they mean? What do we mean by rejecting them? What is involved in their rejection? When we have rejected them what account do we give of the facts—if any—which they attempted to deal with? Now that the clouds and dust of the text-battles are clearing away, these questions emerge; are they not worthy of our attention? And can they be answered without thought and study?

Passing from theology to philosophy and science, we become aware once more of the danger of drifting, of the urgent need of close and systematic thought. Let us take the single and crucial instance of "evolution,"—a conception that stands upon the border-land between philosophy and science, and may be taken as the representative of both. Perhaps most of us have—more or less lazily or enthusiastically, as the case may be—accepted the doctrine, and many of us sincerely congratulate ourselves on the liberality and freedom from prejudice which enabled us to accept it, and to perceive that it was "quite compatible" with religion. But how many of us have fairly and deliberately dealt with the relation of this principle of the "survival of the fittest" and "elimination of the unfittest" to the Christian principle of the "elevation and redemption of the unfittest," or have gauged the extent of its coincidence with, and divergence from, "the survival of the *best*"?

Is there no danger of our leaving ourselves and each other to effect such synthetical operations in a hap-hazard, unconscious, and, as it were, underground style, without guidance, and without clear perception of what they imply, and what modifications of religious or scientific conception and utterance they involve? And can the danger be averted without patient and serious thought and study?

And again, it is not enough to "reconcile" religion and science. Religion must *assimilate* the results of science as part of her food, not disarm them as though they were her foes; and it is idle to think, to hope, or to wish that this assimilation can take place without more or less profoundly affecting the whole intellectual framework of our religious faith, or that it will settle itself by a mere complacent juxtaposition of heterogeneous beliefs without any attempt to unite them into a whole. Here, too, we are in constant danger of drifting into superficiality, end-

ing in fatal unverity; and, to save ourselves from it, we need to have clear heads amongst us, as well as warm hearts.

Apart from the Bible, then, Theology, Philosophy, and Science, and the action and reaction between them and Religion, demand our earnest and constant thought, if religious belief is to be gradually consolidated and advanced, always keeping within touch of the life of our times, and always remaining true to itself.

Only one word on the burning question of political and social problems. Whatever else and whatever more religion may mean, it means, at least, a conception of the true attitude in which we should seek to stand to the Creator and to His creatures. Whatever else and whatever more Christianity may mean, it means, at least, a guiding principle to regulate our relations with our fellow-men. In the face of the absorbing social problems that are more and more laying hold of men's minds, anyone who shall dare to say, "Christianity has nothing to do with these things," is, as far as in him lies, tolling the knell of Christianity itself. *What* Christianity has to say to them, how they are to be attacked and solved in the Christian spirit, and what modifications of religious life and utterance their solution will involve, we may do much towards discovering,—with our fearless and unrepressed individualism, with the wise and generous toleration which alone can make it fruitful, with our plastic institutions and our precious traditions of veracity.

I have now indicated some of the directions in which it seems to me that a definite work for ourselves, for England and for the world, is entrusted to us this day. It is a work that demands free but systematic thought on a wide but clearly mapped-out and ordered field, where distinctness of religious idea and definiteness of religious belief, making religious veracity possible, may be gradually achieved and maintained by a band of thinkers working in informal and unrestrained union from a common basis, and with a common goal. Scholarly and methodic co-operation in such a search for truth would lay the foundation for a popular work, the extent and beneficence of which no man can estimate.

But if we are thus to restore and glorify our tradition of a theologically cultivated laity and learned ministry, our culture and learning must rest upon a basis of serious study inspired by a coherent principle. Can we find such a basis in the easy eclecticism of some monthly miscellany

which spices its literature, art, science, and politics by successive doses of Catholicism, Positivism, Atheism, or Pessimism, but carefully excludes that pure Christian Theism which has yet to leaven the whole lump of our thought, and transfigure the whole tenor of our lives? The bare suggestion would be an only too eloquent proclamation that we had lost all capacity for serious work, and all interest in serious study.

For my part, I cannot believe that, at this moment of all others, we are seriously doubting whether it is worth while any longer even to try to do our duty to ourselves and the world; whether there is any function at all for a magazine which should attempt to rally and organise our forces; whether, if students amongst us are willing to give time and thought to the work, any persons can be found to furnish them with ink and paper; whether—with our history behind us—we have anything to say or anything to do towards the advancement and purification of religious thought and scholarship.

Were such an impossible conclusion arrived at and persevered in, as that a magazine of religious thought and scholarship has no place amongst us, surely it would be equivalent to a deliberate and disgraceful *abdication*, and would proclaim to all whom it might concern, that that awful sentence had already gone out upon us, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.”

Dr. W. B. CARPENTER said :—The duty has been laid upon me to propose a resolution founded upon the eloquent paper that you have just heard, which has set before us so strongly the duty of Free Christian Churches to place before the world the basis of their belief, and to place it in a form which shall give some definite guidance to those masses who are at present feeling out their way in a manner which we heard so admirably described by Mr. Picton. It has happened to me, in the course of fifty years' knowledge of Scotland—in which I studied half a century ago, and with which I have kept up a good deal of communication ever since—it has happened to me to know a great many of these “feelers,” who are honestly and sincerely in search of truth in regard to theological matters, and who, I feel sure, are just at the present time in the position to which a guide is most valuable. I have taken some pains to ascertain from the leaders in the liberal parties of the churches in Scotland—the great Presbyterian Churches—what are their views in regard to the future. I find that the leaders of these churches, among the ministers, are far in advance of the laity; and their apprehension is, lest there should come a time when the upburst of free-thought will produce a sort of destructive eruption, which shall break away

from everything in the past without giving anything in the future. I know it to be the object of many of these leaders, to prepare for this great upburst which they foresee, by preaching a spiritual and rational religion—religion without reference to creeds. Some of you may have read a most interesting volume called “Scotch Sermons.” That volume, I know, was issued as a manifesto by leaders of the freer thought of the churches of Scotland, in order to put before the people of that country the general fundamental ideas on which their faith is based, and thus to prepare the way for the abandonment of the old stand-points. Now, I think all who have watched through fifty years’ progress of religious thought, must see that the time is coming—we are already on the brink of it—when the great conflict will be between the principle of free-thought and the principle of authority. We see this depicted in two men,—(one of them is among the earliest and oldest of my friends)—the two brothers Newman. Born and brought up in the same theological atmosphere, and at an early period of their lives both tending the same way, they afterwards separated, and one went in one direction, and the other in an exactly opposite direction. And why? Because John Newman, the elder, and his early associates, were frightened at what free-thought would lead to; and they fell back to devise a principle which should give them the anchorage that they felt they needed. That principle was what was commonly known as Puseyism. But when men once embraced that, it was perfectly clear they could logically not stop there; they must go back to the great authority of all—the Church of Rome. On the other hand, my friend Francis Newman fearlessly followed the line of perfect freedom of thought, with the single-minded desire to ascertain what was the *truth*. That beautiful and admirable book of his upon the Soul,—the first book he published—has been an anchorage to thoughtful inquirers of all the churches, the basis of the religious life of men and women of the most diverse theological opinions. Then he wrote his “Phases of Faith.” I remember perfectly well one of my Unitarian friends reading that book with great satisfaction until he got to the middle of it; and then, when he found some line of thought which he dared not follow out, as Newman did, to its legitimate end, he said, “Why could not Newman stop here? Why could he not be satisfied with what he has arrived at”? Why, it was simply impossible for Francis Newman to stop. He saw that the reasoning which led him to give up the doctrine of eternal punishment, then the trinity, and so on, must carry him further still. When he first began giving up these things, he said, “I don’t find that it makes much difference in my religious ideas;” and he found himself at the end a not less religious man than he was at the beginning,—perhaps a more truly religious man. I believe with Mr. Picton, that there is a great deal that is really a question of words. I believe that the presentation of the life of Christ in its simple beauty, gives us all that is fundamental in religion. I do not think there is so much difference in the various sects as there seems to be; for all who make the life and teaching of Christ the basis of their religion, must be in agreement on those fundamental conceptions which relate to the character of God and his relations with man. Those dreadful

doctrines of the Westminster Confession and the Assembly's Catechism, which used to be taught to children in Scotland, destroy all their fundamental trust in the paternal character of God. Those are the doctrines, the natural reaction against which is utter unbelief. I say it with knowledge, that the unbelief of some of the most distinguished men in the past and present generations, is the natural reaction against Calvinism, against which their minds revolted as from something impossible for human beings to accept. Now, from that, I believe, we are drifting away so fast that the next generation will see it extinguished. I do not, therefore, think it is necessary at all to go on with that argument in this assembly. The idea now coming to prevail is, that God could not be so wicked as the most wicked man. This has become quite a common stone to fling at those old doctrines, and they fall before it as Goliath fell before the stone of little David. But we have to concern ourselves about what is to be the foundation of the belief of the future. And now I have to address myself to this fundamental question : What can we do to put before the minds of those thinkers whose old bases of belief have been unsettled, those religious conceptions upon which a firmer, surer faith may be built ? Now, the resolution I have to propose is this :—

“That this Conference recognises the obligation laid upon the Free Churches, in view alike of their traditions and of their present position, to maintain a Magazine representative of Religious Thought and Scholarship ; and requests the following gentlemen to act as a Committee to inaugurate such a Magazine ; and empowers them, on behalf of the Conference, to make all necessary financial and literary arrangements. Committee :

Dr. CARPENTER

Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY

Prof. DRUMMOND

RUSSELL MARTINEAU, Esq.

Prof. CARPENTER

HERBERT NEW, Esq.

Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG

Dr. W. BLAKE ODGERS

with power to add to their number.”

Now, I had hoped to have heard in Mr. Wicksteed's paper, a plan in which such a work should be brought out. I have had no opportunity, during this Conference, to confer with any of the gentlemen who are to inaugurate that scheme ; but I will express, very briefly, what you will understand to be my personal convictions on the subject. I think that this magazine should be a magazine for the people, and not merely for the colleges. I am very anxious that it should be made as interesting as possible, and that it should command a wide range of readers. I think it should be placed upon a broad basis—the basis of free-thought—and not of any particular conclusions. You know my life has been spent in scientific study ; and I recognise that in science I must pursue my investigations without thinking or fearing what they will lead to. So, in religion, I am a great deal more in sympathy with those who thoroughly uphold free-thought, than with any who bind themselves to a creed, even though that creed happens to agree with my own present convictions. I believe in an honest search after truth for its own sake. Some of my dearest friends, those

with whom I most sympathise in religious matters, are men who hold opinions different from my own. I have gone through considerable change myself, upon points of religious opinion ; but it has only elevated and broadened my religious ideas, and has not, in any sense or degree, interfered with my belief in God and His moral government. I shall, therefore, suggest that the pages of the proposed magazine be open to the fullest and freest discussion on all subjects of religious thought ; for I am satisfied—the experience of my scientific life has taught me—that there is nothing like discussion for the elimination of truth.

The Rev. Dr. DRUMMOND, in seconding the resolution, said :—There is no doubt that very many young men are experiencing great changes in their religious sentiments at the present day ; and I think the problem which Mr. Picton has brought before us in his paper concerning this great change which is taking place in the theological beliefs of so many of our countrymen, is a problem for ourselves to consider as well as those outside. I had the privilege this afternoon of reading a letter from one of our most earnest and thoughtful laymen, in which he expresses his great interest in the particular scheme before us, which, he thinks, is very much needed, especially for our younger men. They are perplexed by the speculations of the present day, and their friends around them do not meet their questions and difficulties ; and the writer of this letter says, that numbers of these young men will go off into complete agnosticism if suitable helps and encouragements are not provided for the religious side of their nature. Now, I presume the object of such a magazine as is proposed to be published, would be, in the first place, to lay before its readers the results of the best scholarship which its writers can reach in theological subjects. There is some tendency among us at the present day to disparage theology ; and it is said that if we lay our pages open to the dry details of mere theological scholarship, in order to reach the few minds of more technical culture, we shall miss the great mass of the people. Still, we must have our theology kept in continual harmony with the knowledge of our times, and we need some organ for the interchange of scholarly thought ; but I think we should endeavour not only to provide some few articles which might, perhaps, only be interesting to those who were engaged in the study of special subjects, but provide much more abundantly for the instruction of the large mass of our people who cannot be expected to go very deeply into the more scholarly aspects of these questions. And I believe that there may possibly be found those among us who can set forth, in literary form, some of the larger conclusions of scholars, together with the arguments, or, at least, the general line of argument, on which those conclusions may be made to rest, and that these may be made intelligible and interesting to all cultivated laymen. I do hope that there may be a revival amongst us of interest in theological questions ; I do hope that these questions, which used to engage the intensest interest of the human heart, will yet be considered worthy of the most serious thought and labour which our time may enable us to give to them. There is one other advantage which such a magazine might give us. There was at one time, in the *Theological Review*, an ecclesiastical chronicle, published in

successive numbers, which was of exceeding interest. Now, in our proposed Review, we want a chronicle of this kind. It might embrace a short notice of general ecclesiastical affairs, but ought to devote, I think, a much larger space to the great movements of free thought and the records of the free churches. There is just one other point on which I might touch, and that is, that we should consider whether the magazine is likely to be a financial success. That, if we are to judge from experience, must be regarded as extremely doubtful, at least at the beginning of its career, and certainly some capital will be needed to start it. The passing of this resolution, then, should mean that certain funds will be forthcoming. There are some who take the position that scholarship, like other things, must follow the law of supply and demand, and that if a work is not a financial success, then this is a proof that it was not wanted. I have heard this remark again and again in regard to proposed publications, and the consequence is, that the higher literature amongst us is in a starved condition. The simple fact is that Unitarians do not afford a sufficiently large market for theological publications, and the great mass of those who are outside the freer churches regard us with suspicion, if not with abhorrence, and will not purchase works coming from a Unitarian quarter. The market for our literature is, therefore, limited; and I think we should be prepared, for the sake of maintaining our own standard of thought and culture, as well as of influencing a few beyond our borders, to spend a little money in a magazine of the kind proposed. Even if the number sold were not very large, still the magazine might be good in quality, and extend, to a certain degree, beyond the limits of our churches, and in time have some influence upon the thoughts of our countrymen. At all events, it is surely desirable for ourselves, that our scholars and our thinkers should receive some practical encouragement; and that, when they are devoting the best part of their lives to thinking out religious questions for the benefit of their fellow-men, they should receive that amount of pecuniary assistance which is necessary to enable them to lay the results of their study before the world. I hope, therefore, that this Conference will give an assurance of such support as will enable the promoters of the magazine to engage in it with the certainty of success, and with the high hope of producing articles which will be worthy of the people for whom they are written.

The Rev. FRANCIS H. JONES, B.A., said:—There are two points in regard to the support of a magazine, about which I should like to say a few words. Dr. Drummond has spoken of one thing which is often urged very strongly, and that is, the desirability of any magazine being self-supporting. It is often said that if anything of this kind is wanted, it will be supported by the public in the ordinary way. Now, I venture to say that scarcely any religious work has ever been self-supporting in this sense. I do not believe that any one of our places of worship is self-supporting, if by that we are to understand that no one gives more than simply what is the market value for the privileges which he himself enjoys there. In all we find some system or other, whereby different persons contribute various amounts, according to their means or their interest in the work, for a common purpose. And if a religious work is to be

done by us through the press, as well as in the pulpit, it must be done on some similar plan. In the second place, I wish to add my testimony, from my own personal knowledge, to the fact, that in this matter we are not acting for ourselves alone. There are many readers—more, I believe, outside what are known as the Unitarian and other Free Churches, than within them—who wish for clearer theological ideas, and a more rational and more accurate historical interpretation of the Bible ; but they are scattered throughout the land in different and, to some extent, hostile religious bodies. We alone are sufficiently united in this to co-operate and provide what is wanted. Each religious body has, in these days, its own particular work to do, and, if it does it faithfully, it does it not for itself alone but for the whole world. We have been proud of being pioneers in rational theology. Pioneering work, and the promotion of principles and publication of well-ascertained results in criticism and interpretation, are, at the present day, carried on mainly by means of our periodical literature. The onus still lies upon us of carrying on this pioneering work, and of the promotion of *principles*, and of the fearless publication of the results of modern scholarship and research ; and, therefore, of supporting a magazine in which this can be done. Dr. Crosskey has spoken of the power of the religious life among the English people. But, in addition to the purely spiritual life of our people, there lies also before them an intellectual life. It is in this latter that the greatest advance is now being made. It lies in great measure with us, who have always maintained that the purest intellectual life and the purest spiritual life must be in perfect harmony with one another, to determine whether the intellectual life of the English people shall also be a spiritual life or not. The universities, and other educational bodies, are reintroducing the English people to its own grand literature ; and the literature of Greece and Rome is brought within reach of English readers by means of translations, with able yet popular introductions, manuals of classical literature, and so forth. There is another great field which Oxford and Cambridge are trying to popularise in the same way ; but they do not, and at present they cannot, deal with it as they deal with the literature of England, of Greece, and of Rome,—this is the great field of the history and literature of Judaism, and of the first two centuries of Christianity, which we find in the Bible. I say, again, we are the only people who can deal with this in the spirit of absolute freedom and unwavering sincerity, combined with deep reverence for all that is spiritual in it ; and, I ask, are we ready and willing to undertake this duty to ourselves and to those who are looking to us for it ; or are we going to let it remain undone till others shall put us to shame by taking up the duty that we have cast aside ?

The resolution having been put, and carried unanimously, the Conference adjourned.

PUBLIC MEETING,

TOWN HALL, WEDNESDAY EVENING.

[A Public Meeting and Conversazione was held in the Town Hall, beginning at half-past seven o'clock. The attendance was very large,—probably two thousand persons being present. The Hall was arranged mainly for the purposes of social intercourse: the speeches forming a comparatively small part of the proceedings. Under the direction of the Local Committee, the Hall had been fitted up with mirrors, curtains, rugs, and drapery, so as to present the appearance of an immense drawing room,—couches and chairs being placed to form alcoves beneath the galleries, while a group of palm trees in the centre, and other floral decorations, gave a unique character to its appearance.]

The CHAIRMAN (ALDERMAN MARTINEAU, Mayor of Birmingham,) called upon the Rev. Dr. Crosskey to read a few letters of sympathy with the objects of the Conference which had been received. They were as follows:—

“HUNGARY,

“KOLOZSVAR, *1st April, 1885.*

“DEAR SIR,

“I was gratified to receive your cordial invitation to the National Conference of the Unitarian and Kindred Congregations, to be held at Birmingham, on the 14th and following days of April.

“I have no doubt that the effect of the Conference will be just as good and far reaching as are its purposes.

“You may be assured that nobody could wish more to be present than myself and the members of our Unitarian Church here. To our little church, so much suffered in the past, and secluded now here in the very extreme East of civilised Europe, it would be indeed a real comfort to be present at your Conference, and ‘be drawn together more closely by living bonds of sympathy as members of one body,’ in which

there are 'diversities of gifts but the same spirit.' We very much wished to get encouragement and strength from the discussions which are so highly promising this time also. Might it be that, at your religious services, our hearts also could be filled with the conviction that 'to aid in the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth is the great work demanded from all congregations.' Indeed our hearts are drawing us nearer and nearer to you whenever you perform such acts of fellowship, and we are highly thankful for the kind invitation, which we consider a sign of your sympathy towards us.

"It is a pity that, because of the great distance that separates us in space, neither I nor any of us can be present this time at your Conference; but we shall be watching its proceedings with a great interest, and shall study the ideas and thoughts brought forth in the discourses and discussions to be held there.

"May your multitude who come together now be like to them on the first Pentecost, 'of one heart and soul.' May the holy spirit of truth, of love, and of the fear of God, come upon you, that you may be witnesses of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ in all parts of the world. May you be able to raise, during the three days of your Conference, three such steadfast pillars which shall speak loud of the noble work which you are pursuing in the name of liberal Christianity.

"Thanking your kind invitation again, I pray you to express our brotherly greetings to all the friends who will be present.

"Accept, dear Sir, my best regards, and believe me

"Very faithfully yours,

"JOSEPH FERENCZA,

"*Bishop of the Unitarian Churches in Hungary.*"

"38, UNION SQUARE,

"NEW YORK, *March 31st, 1885.*

"*To Messrs. Henry W. Crosskey, S. Alfred Steinthal, Harry Rawson, A. W. Worthington, Honorary Secretaries, &c., of the Birmingham Conference.*

"DEAR BRETHREN,

"Your cordial letter of last month, inviting us to send a representative to your approaching Conference at Birmingham, was duly received, and we took steps at once to secure, if possible, the attendance of an American delegate.

"One of our younger ministers, an earnest and able representative of our younger men, and fully competent to speak for us all,—the Rev. John G. Brooks, of Boston,—has been spending some time in Germany, and the Chairman of our Council, the Rev. James De Normandie, of Boston, has written urging Mr. Brooks to be our representative at your meeting. * * *

"We remember with much pleasure the presence, at our Saratoga meeting, last September, of Messrs. Worthington, Robberds, Hunter, and Herford, * * *

Trusting that we shall not be without at least one spokesman, please think of us as *all* present in spirit, and cherishing a lively and ever-growing interest in whatever concerns the prosperity of Unitarian principles, whether at home or abroad. With our best wishes for the success of your meeting, believe me to be, dear Sirs, on behalf of our Council,

“Yours most sincerely,

“RUSSELL N. BELLOWS,

“*General Secretary.*”

The CHAIRMAN then continued :—We are here to-night rather for the purpose of social intercourse and enjoyment than anything more formal ; but the programme will have pointed out to you that it is proposed to begin the proceedings of the evening by a public meeting, which is intended to last one hour. I think you will gather from this announcement that the speeches cannot be both numerous and long ; and I venture to think that this will be regarded as a merciful dispensation by those of you who have been listening to speaking most of the day. Now, I owe my present position as your chairman to-night, to the fact that I happen this year to hold the high office of Mayor of Birmingham, and I think this circumstance makes it fitting and proper that I should be the one to say a few words of hearty welcome to the many visitors whom our good town has received for the purpose of this Conference. There is no doubt that the splendid success of the Conference held in Liverpool three years ago, made it evident, and made it evident even before that Conference was over, that it would not be the last of its kind ; and the question naturally arose with those who had the conduct of these matters, what should be the place chosen for the second Conference ? Now, it was desirable, of course, to choose a town which was central in position, and easily accessible by railway ; but I venture to think that in the selection of Birmingham as the site for the second Conference of the Free Christian Churches, other considerations had to be borne in mind besides those of geography and Bradshaw. I think it very likely that Birmingham was regarded as a place the very name of which was associated with the principles of civil and religious liberty. And, in particular, it may have occurred to them that we, the members of the Free Christian Churches of Birmingham, have glorious traditions to look back upon in the past. Well, now, it gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to congratulate you all most heartily upon the marked success

which has attended your present gathering. What is this meeting? It is a meeting of a large number of ladies and gentlemen, both from this neighbourhood and from great distances—in fact, from all parts of the United Kingdom,—of persons not bound by any identity of theological tenet, but holding, in the main, the freedom of Christian principle, in this sense,—that they belong to churches which do not make it an indispensable condition that their members should hold any particular dogmatic opinions. I venture to say that, if such is the nature of the congress here, the persons assembled may be considered to be, in the strictest sense, the historic descendants of the two thousand ejected ministers who founded free nonconformity. Your meeting is remarkable for the extent to which it is representative of these principles; it is remarkable for the number of institutions which are here represented by delegates; and it is remarkable, also, for the large number of persons who have been attracted, individually, to this meeting. Now, it may be interesting to you to know what are the institutions, or some of them, which have sent representatives to this great congress. We have amongst them the Manchester New College, and I am happy to say that the representatives of the College are persons whose distinction will be recognised by all present,—I mean Professors Carpenter and Dr. Drummond. We have the Unitarian Home Missionary Board represented by its Principal, the Rev. J. E. Odgers, M.A., and other tutors. We have the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; and we have various associations of a local character from nearly all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. We have the Sunday School Association; the Manchester District Sunday School Association; the Liverpool Sunday School Teachers' Association; and many others. We have also, I am happy to say, a representative of churches on the other side of the broad Atlantic Ocean. I am glad that those with whom we sympathise in the United States of America, have thought it well to send, as a representative to this Congress, the Rev. J. E. Brooks, whom I believe we shall have the pleasure of hearing to-night. Well, then passing from the institutions which are represented by this Congress, to the case of individual persons, I may tell you that there have come to Birmingham a number approaching nine hundred. They include ministers, professors of colleges, Sunday school teachers, and active laymen, many of whom have travelled

long distances. In fact, it may be said—if I may quote the eloquent words of the preacher who addressed us from this place last night,—that they came from many a place, from the granite north to the chalk cliffs of the south. Well, now, to such a distinguished assemblage, I think I may, on behalf of our Birmingham friends, and on behalf of Birmingham,—offer the most hearty welcome; and for all those in Birmingham who have assisted in this movement, I may add, that they earnestly hope this Conference, in its public services and discussions, and in the more private intercourse of its members (involving, I hope, the renewal of many an old friendship), may be productive of great and lasting benefit. Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not detain you any longer, else I am afraid we should run some risk of postponing the musical entertainment which is to come after the speeches; but I shall have great pleasure in calling upon Mr. Alderman Chamberlain to address you, and to join me in giving a welcome to our friends. You will subsequently be addressed by representatives of the different societies who have attended here, namely, by Dr. W. B. Carpenter, who will respond on behalf of the laymen; by the Rev. S. A. Steinthal, who will respond on behalf of the ministers; and by the Rev. J. E. Brooks, from America. I have now the pleasure of calling upon Mr. Alderman Chamberlain.

MR. ALDERMAN RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN, in supporting, said:—Mr. Mayor, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—It has been thought advisable that some one, as representing the laymen of our chapels and churches here, should offer a few words of welcome, for fear it should be considered that His Worship the Mayor was speaking simply in a ministerial capacity. It seems to me that there is something historical in the welcome we offer you, because it was in this district, that, after the Act of Uniformity, our fathers first established churches and chapels without dogmatic restrictions of any kind, and we, appreciating the benefits they have in this way conferred on us, offer to you, who are enjoying similar privileges elsewhere, a hearty welcome. And there is a further historical reason, and that is, that in Birmingham—though in no sense a fortified town—in Birmingham men have, in times past, sought relief from persecution elsewhere. You, Sir, represent one section—the Huguenots; I, for my part, am a representative of one of the two thousand ejected ministers to whom you alluded just now; and if we, who happen to be speaking, are

so far representative, believe me, there are many others in Birmingham who have taken refuge here, and settled fairly in such a congenial atmosphere; and we are glad to see representatives from other parts of the country. We may, then, I think, congratulate ourselves in Birmingham that we have secured at least toleration,—as some of our opponents might say, we have got that, and something more. Well, if it is fitting that for these historical reasons we should offer you welcome, there is additional reason that our welcome should be hearty, because we fully appreciate the good services that are being rendered by the ministers of Nonconformist churches to the cause of civil and religious liberty throughout the country, for our Nonconformist chapels are centres of Liberal opinion of every kind. Then, again, we have to thank the representatives of the different Nonconformist bodies for the great benefits which they have rendered to the spread of a right opinion on a great national question,—that of education; and, generally, that they have stimulated the Liberal life and broad thought of the community in every district in which they are settled. Well, recognising, as we do, the services that have been conferred in the past, are we to suppose that these are ended, and that we may sit down and take our rest? I think not. A new era is about to be opened before us, and there will be continual reason for exertion. There is more and more room for workers such as these, and not for a long time shall we be able to dispense with their services. Our churches have always been distinguished for two things: first of all, the recognition of the fact that the service of humanity was a service divinely appointed,—for we have in no sense attempted to make our religion a subject for the Sunday alone, but considered it to be a part and portion of our daily life; and then, further, I think we may take credit for this—that we have been distinguished by our continued search after truth, and have always been willing to recognise scientific discoveries as part and portion of divine truth. I think I may venture to offer, on behalf of all present, our most cordial welcome to Dr. Carpenter, whom we are so glad to see here, to the Rev. S. A. Steinthal, and to all of you, ladies and gentlemen, on this your visit to Birmingham. Our thoughts are in sympathy one with the other; we are glad to have the opportunity of meeting you, and we believe that we shall derive very great benefit, as

well as pleasure, from your presence on this occasion. I beg to offer all, on behalf of the Nonconformist laymen of Birmingham, a hearty welcome on this your visit to Birmingham.

Dr. W. B. CARPENTER, C.B., in replying, said :—Mr. Mayor, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I could have wished that some one more able than myself to respond fittingly, on behalf of the Conference, to the cordial welcome which has been given to it in this town, had been selected by the managers to make that response. Having been honoured, however, by the request that I should undertake this duty, I did not feel that I ought to shrink from it.—Sir, you have referred to the glorious traditions of Birmingham. Since I was asked to present myself on this occasion to an audience largely consisting of representatives of free thought in Birmingham, my mind has travelled back over those traditions; and I have naturally dwelt on that period, now a century ago, when the cause of free thought in Birmingham was represented by a man who, of all others, combined in himself the characters of a great religious teacher and a great scientific investigator. Anxious for nothing but truth in science, and reverently teaching what he believed to be the truth in religion, he was equally distinguished, in both lines of inquiry, by the earnestness with which he sought for truth, and for the perfect freedom with which he abandoned his earlier beliefs, when he saw there were better beliefs to be gained. Having been educated in strict Calvinism, and having, when he began to think for himself, first abandoned the doctrine of eternal punishment, and then that of election and predestination, he threw off all the orthodox shackles, one after another, and came at last to embrace our simple Unitarianism. I need not tell you that that man was Joseph Priestley. One of the sayings for which I most honour him was this; when taunted with his changes of religious opinion, he replied,—“I scorn to say one year what my religious opinions shall be the next.” Now, that arose from no instability of mind, but simply from the earnestness of the love of truth which he carried into his religious inquiries. In his scientific investigations, he always showed that he “loved truth better than his system”; and this principle he applied, also, to religious truth. As he never laid down the principle of finality in his search for physical truth, neither would he adopt it in his search for religious truth. But, Sir, in the time of Priestley, the founda-

tion was laid in this town of another great revolution in thought, which we are even now going through. There was in this town a small society having a very curious name—the Lunar Society—composed of very able and thoughtful men, including Priestley, Boulton, Watt, Wedgwood, and Galton. Of that society Erasmus Darwin was a conspicuous member; and there was laid the foundation of that line of thought, which culminated in his grandson, Charles Darwin,—a line of thought which I have no hesitation in saying will do more to upset those old beliefs which, as Unitarians, we have always opposed, and to promote rational modes of looking at religious inquiry, than any of the great principles that have been already worked out by scientific investigation. Now, what is Science? It is simply the intellectual interpretation of Nature; the reason of man applying itself to discover the truths of the universe, and, by generalizing those truths, aiming to penetrate as nearly as it may towards the First Cause of Nature. Science pursued in that spirit can never lead to anything but good; and I claim for our own religious body that it has never been afraid of scientific truth. I am old enough to remember, Sir, when Geology was looked upon with suspicion,—somewhat as the Greek language was looked upon in Reformation times—as a very dangerous study. And it was only because Sedgwick, Buckland, Conybeare, and other clergymen, threw themselves into that study, that it got any footing at all. What was the position of geology fifty years ago? Why this,—that when Dr. Buckland, in bringing out his *Bridgewater Treatise*, felt himself bound to give up the belief he had previously advocated as to the universality of the Noachian deluge, he was so afraid of what the public might say of his change, that he got a “feeler” first put forth in an anticipatory review in the “Quarterly.” Since that time, geology has had to fight its way; but now nobody ever thinks of opposing it on theological grounds. The “Antiquity of Man” was one of the last of those heresies which have had to be accepted; for even Buckland and Pye Smith were very much afraid of impugning the received doctrine which limited his existence to the six thousand years of the Biblical chronology. We, as Free Christians, claim to have been always ready to accept that or any other well-founded conclusion of science; never having been trammelled by the question “what it would lead to.” And I say exactly the same in regard to another most important department of science, which is now greatly occupying the

attention of thoughtful minds,—the study of Human Nature. We hold ourselves quite free to carry that study to its very utmost range, and to accept whatever Science may teach as to Man's origin and history,—the mode in which he has come to be what he is, and the relation of his mental to his physical constitution. We have no fear of what that study may lead to; for we feel confident that the more widely and the more thoroughly it is pursued, the more certainly will it demonstrate the essential religiousness of man's nature.—Well, Sir, to come back to Birmingham:—it may be said that the people of Birmingham could not appreciate Priestley, and drove him away. It is perfectly true that there was a knot of bigots here, excited by a strong feeling of antagonism to the French Revolution, which had evoked from Priestley warm expressions of sympathy; and that they drove Priestley away. But, Sir, you know the saying of early Christian times, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. I was myself a witness, fifty years ago, of the terrible riots of Bristol; I saw its fires in full blaze. But from that fire, Sir, arose the Municipal Reform Bill, which re-created the corporations of Bristol and other old boroughs, and gave to Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and other great towns of this country, a corporate life. So, I firmly believe that the fires which arose here in the year 1791, from the meeting-house, the dwelling, and the laboratory of Priestley, and from the residences of the leading liberal nonconformists of that time, proved a beacon-torch which has kept Birmingham from that time in the fore-front of liberal thought and liberal work. I have, Sir, one other memory to advert to. It was at a conference, brought together in Birmingham by one of its most distinguished citizens—Matthew Davenport Hill—working in conjunction with one whom I am proud to call my sister, Mary Carpenter (herself descended from a Midland-county family), that the foundation was laid of that preventive legislation, which has resulted in the progressive diminution of that juvenile crime which was previously increasing at an appalling rate. I regard this Reformatory action as the greatest example of Christian work ever carried out in this country. Sir, we all know who it was who told us:—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." It is in work, Sir, done in the spirit of Christ, that we come to know the real basis of Christian faith. The work, as

it developes, gives force and definiteness to the Christian belief ; and the Christian's faith strengthens itself by exercise in Christian work. Every scientific man finds this the case in himself. As was well said by my friend Professor James Stuart (who has recently succeeded Professor Fawcett as M.P. for Hackney), in a lecture he gave fourteen years ago, " Science is continually teaching mankind that no discovery can be made, no subject understood, but by means of personal investigation, personal labour, and personal thought. You may, indeed, understand some natural phenomenon from another person's description or explanation ; but if you investigate it for yourself, you will understand about it what you could never learn from any teaching. A new light arises round the subject ; and nature itself becomes its own interpreter. The religion we profess is founded on the same principle. If we wish to make its teachings truly our own, we must ourselves tread in the footsteps of its founder."

I shall not detain you longer than to ask you to accept, on behalf of this great Conference, our warmest thanks for the cordial and generous welcome you have given us. That welcome, I feel assured, may be taken as an expression of the hearty concurrence of our Birmingham friends in our conviction that religious truth—like scientific truth—has nothing to fear from the freest possible inquiry ; and that as, in the past, we have never found reason to be afraid of the results of any critical or scientific investigation, so in the future, it will prove that our highest knowledge will only give added force and comprehensiveness to our religious faith. I hope that what has taken place in the Conference this afternoon, will help us forward in the diffusion of our views ; and that the desire so generally expressed that they should be placed before the public in a simple and intelligible, and at the same time attractive form, will be fulfilled.

The Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL also replied. He said :—Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel that it is indeed an honour to be called upon as the representative of the ministers who are gathered together here, to respond to the kindly welcome which you, Mr. Mayor, and your colleague, Mr. Alderman Chamberlain, have given to us so heartily in words this evening ; and yet I feel that a warmer welcome still has been given to us since we arrived here yesterday, to which it is even a deeper pleasure to give thanks,—that cordial reception which you have given to us in the

homes where you have welcomed us, and the kindly and generous and genial hospitality that you have offered to us so very freely. When I look upon this meeting, and see how anxious every one naturally is to interchange kindly words of friendship which all long to speak when we meet together in assemblies like this, and see you patiently standing there while we who have to speak have comfortable seats upon this platform, why, I almost feel inclined to address you as a "noble army of martyrs." As I am not exactly of a cruel temperament, and though I stand rather in fear and dread of the Doctor who sits behind me, I must say I have strong objections to experiments on living creatures, and I don't intend to inflict any torture upon you by any lengthened remarks. But I would say, that I rejoice indeed most heartily in being able to stand here and speak for those who minister to churches that are free ; that are free, not in the sense that unfortunately seems to be gaining ground in certain directions—of freedom from State control—a freedom that, in England, unites the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterians, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Methodists, as if they really had any true principle in common,—but a freedom that springs from within the soul, and that leads to that high and holy quest after truth, of which Dr. Carpenter has spoken with the eloquence which comes from long practice of that research. We, also, are free to act with independence and devout enthusiasm in every good and practical work to which our churches are devoted, as Mr. Chamberlain has so well described. Sir, our theology is now *free*,—and we have free liberty to declare it,—but we look back to those days when Dr. Priestley was not allowed to express his opinions freely, even in this town of Birmingham. And, by the way, if I am not mistaken, the Mr. Russell, whose kindly services so many of us have gratefully recognised this week, is a descendant of one who was a fellow-confessor with Dr. Priestley in the martyr days. We have had a free theology, Sir, from Dr. Priestley's time. But how changed is that theology now from what it was then ! What advances we have made ! And who dare place a limit to the advance that free-thought will yet make in its inquiries ? But mark, while our theology has cast off many shackles and become truly free, how our fervour and devotion have grown too. Observe the tone of faith which sounds through the words of Dr. Martineau. The spirit that burned in Dr. Channing, Theodore Parker, and others, how much

more fervid, how much more warm, was that than the spirit of devotion of fifty years ago! A free theology has been accompanied by a growing depth of devotional fervour. And look, too, at the heartiness of the work in which we have been engaged. While Dr. Carpenter, with justice, speaks of his sister, and we speak with thankfulness of her achievements, we also remember with gratitude that, in the town of Portsmouth, a poor cobbler of our faith began the work of ragged schools. The ancestor of a gentleman present here, Dr. Tuckerman it was, who, from our ranks, gave birth to that truest of all Christian agencies—the Domestic Mission. We know of no branch of philanthropic work which has been richer in noble deeds of self-sacrifice and Christian love than this. And as we greet one another to-day, after three years' separation, we feel that at any rate the hearts that have given the welcome, and the spirits that have accepted it so gratefully, are falsely accused of coldness or want of feeling. Those who charge us with coldness, when they learn to know us better, will value more fully the bonds of sympathy which unite us together, and which make us rejoice, as we do rejoice to-night, and gladly greet each other, hoping to meet in many a conference of friendly words, and of friendly work as well.

The Rev. J. G. Brooks, the Representative of the American Churches, said:—Mr. Chairman, I thank you very sincerely, first of all, on behalf of the Churches in America that I have the honour to represent, and, secondly, for myself. I only wish I could have known something of this welcome a little earlier, because, just recently, I had a friendly discussion with a Roman Catholic, and he assured me, with something of personal pride, that I could know nothing whatever of the utter removal of strangeness which a Catholic felt as he stepped across the threshold of his own, or any other Catholic Church, in whatsoever land he might find himself. If I had only anticipated this welcome, I could have assured him that I, too, knew that feeling; that I, too, knew what it was to be at home in a strange country. Now, it was in a very friendly way whispered to me that I should say all that I could in three minutes. I can only make a brief reference, catching a hint from the drift of every word I have heard at the Conference, and that is this,—that in America, if there is anything worth telling you to-night, it is just what I heard in every discourse this afternoon, namely, that the bonds of intellectual restriction are growing

lighter over the water as they are here; and that the deeper, more practical, and more permanent needs of society are coming more and more to be considered in all our church work. I only knew an hour ago that a relative of Dr. Martineau was Mayor of Birmingham. This pleasantly suggests the one other thing I would add. I am sorry it is so common-place, or that there is no way of clothing it with novelty. It is only what we have heard at every meeting within our memory—the effect of the more liberal religious thought on the community. Yet I am sure that if the American Churches had no other reason of being than to circulate the books of Dr. Martineau, there would have been the amplest justification for their existence; for I could not in any way exaggerate both the power and the influence of those books upon just the men in America that we wish most to meet, namely, the religious teachers of other denominations than our own. I have just come from the Southern part of Germany, and a kindly, scholarly pastor there opened his library to me. When I expressed my delight at finding the books of Dr. Martineau in that library, he lifted up his hands, and said, “We have nothing like them—nothing like them!” This is the kind of influence in which we cannot have too much faith;—for which we cannot make too many sacrifices. The present Hibbert lecturer, bears the same testimony as to this influence upon him. “I want to see Dr. Martineau,” he said, “because with no man’s thought am I in deeper sympathy.” He confesses gladly the strong influence upon him of this chosen king, among the living, of our religious faith. Religious teachers are coming, more than ever, to do the work in the spirit, at least, of our Unitarian leaders, and every such evidence should be an encouragement. I desire again, Mr. Chairman, to return the most cordial thanks for this welcome to our Unitarian Association and to the National Conference, and to assure you of their hearty interest, sympathy, and fellowship.

The Chairman then called on the Rev. C. HARGROVE, M.A., who spoke as follows:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I have been asked to say a few words to you about the object of this Conference. Perhaps it is rather late in the day for it; but I shall be very brief. Had the question been asked only some forty years ago at a similar Conference, the answer would have been clear. We should have said that we upheld certain great principles which found no place of hearing except in our

churches; that we maintained the unity of God, the simple humanity of Christ, the supreme jurisdiction of reason and conscience in all causes—religious, moral, social and political. But this answer is not a sufficient one now,—not that we have retreated at all from those principles which were upheld by our forefathers; but that other churches have adopted the same principles, so that now the pulpit and the press are alike open to the declaration of them, and that now one may hold these religious views as firmly as we do, or as the Unitarians of forty years ago did, and belong at the same time to almost any of the Trinitarian churches. You may be a lay communicant, or you may, with sufficient prudence, be even a minister of religion in those churches, and yet hold Unitarian views. What, then, is our reason for holding this Conference now? What is it that induces us to go to some little trouble, and expense, and sacrifice of time to be here, and induces our friends to make so great a sacrifice of time, trouble, and expense to receive us? Ladies and Gentlemen,—if I mistake not, it is not for the sake of our principles, but it is on behalf of the *free utterance* of those principles that we have met together in this Conference. We have heard, and most truly, that devotion can be maintained in all churches alike; that men who hold the freest views may find their devotion stimulated by services which do not express those views—by hymns, and prayers, and readings which, in their literal sense, are repugnant to them. This is undoubtedly true. But what we, without condemning others, require of ourselves is, that as we should be absolutely truthful in our relations to our fellow-men, we should be even more so in our relations with Almighty God. We separate ourselves with so much pain, with so much reluctance; sacrificing so much, not merely of social advantage, but of religious advantage, too; we separate ourselves from the communion of other churches—or put ourselves in a position in which they excommunicate us—for the sake of being absolutely and entirely true in prayer and hymn and reading, for the sake of approaching Almighty God with clear intellects as well as pure hearts. And for what else was it that our fathers struggled? For what did the martyrs bleed or burn? They might have maintained their own principles within their hearts, but were not content to do so, and they died sooner than not speak them out to the world. For what was it that, so short a time ago, some, even, of the older men here, sacrificed their political rights as citizens? It was

not required of them that they should, in their hearts or in their private conversation, believe or disbelieve ought; but they gave up all the advantages of Conformity, that they might speak out what they believed, and that they might say nothing in prayer, consent to nothing in public worship, which they disbelieved; they died, they struggled, they made real and painful sacrifices for this alone. There are some here present who rightly boast of being descended from them; we are all their spiritual sons: let us be worthy of them, then, and let those who can boast a carnal descent from them lead us in the way, that we may be all worthy of our sires. And let us, while we condemn none who take another view of religious obligation or public worship, determine for ourselves that we will be true in all our religion, as in our lives, and that we will bring to God no sacrifice that is in any way stained with falsehood. This, I take it, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the object of our Conference. Our churches are few; but, though they do not alone uphold these great principles which we profess, they alone speak them out to all the world, and strive to make all their forms of worship conform entirely to the principles which they maintain.

The Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY said:—Mr. Mayor, I have been requested by the Conference Committee to submit to this meeting a resolution which will speak for itself to the minds and hearts of all the representatives of our Free Christian Churches. The 80th birthday of Dr. Martineau is next Tuesday; and we shall one and all be desirous of taking advantage of that occasion to express the affection and the reverence we feel towards him; and our devout gratitude for the services he has rendered to the churches we represent, as well as to the lives of all who have come within the circle of his influence. It is an especial privilege, Mr. Mayor, to move this resolution at a meeting presided over by you—as his near relation,—and as one who has so faithfully and worthily sustained the great religious principles identified with the name of Dr. Martineau. I beg to propose that the following Address be presented to Dr. Martineau, on the occasion of the near approach of his 80th birthday:—

“That this National Conference of the members and friends of the Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, Non-Subscribing, and kindred Congregations in Great Britain and Ireland, assembled in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on April 15th, 1885, under the Presidency of the Mayor of Birmingham (Alderman Martineau), respectfully and affectionately offers to the Rev. James

Martineau, D.D., LL.D., its congratulations on the near attainment of his 80th birthday ; and desires to avail itself of this occasion to express its deep thankfulness to him for the priceless services he has rendered not only to the churches whose representatives are now gathered together, but to Christendom itself, and indeed to the large world of thoughtful and worshipful souls. In an age of unfettered and fearless inquiry, it thanks him for having shown, in the noble series of articles which he has published from time to time, as well as in his latest work, the everlasting foundations on which the claims of duty and faith in the living God alike repose, unshaken by the shifting theories of passing schools of philosophic thought. It is devoutly thankful to him for the Religious Teachings which, originally given in churches connected with this Conference, have, on their publication, taken their place in the religious literature of England. To all those who have come within the circle of his influence the Christian life has become more real and possible ; and this Conference acknowledges, on behalf of very many of its members, not only large obligations to a thinker who has guided their minds, but deeper obligations to a master who has touched their consciences and sustained their immortal hopes. It humbly prays Almighty God that he may long be spared to enjoy the rest he has now sought, and to direct by his wisdom the College and the Churches in whose active service he can no longer engage.”*

MR. T. CHATFIELD CLARKE, of London, in seconding the Resolution, said :—It may not be known to this meeting that Dr. Martineau has written a letter to the members of the Committee who have the conduct of this Conference, and I believe I am betraying no secrets when I say that that letter will be published, together with the other papers, in the Report. Now, I will say only one thing, that if you value Dr. Martineau as I do, you will one and all endorse most deeply and most earnestly the resolution which will be put from the chair. I know not which most to admire in Dr. Martineau—the power of his thought, the depth of his spirituality and devoutness, or the beautiful nature and high character he has sustained throughout a long career. May God, in His mercy, shower down upon him, in his declining years, every blessing and happiness that may be enjoyed by man.

DR. W. B. CARPENTER, in supporting the Resolution, said :—I request permission to add a few words, because I think it probable that my recollections of Dr. Martineau go back further than those of any one present. For it must be nearly sixty-five years ago since I began to learn to love and respect him ; and my love and respect have only deepened with time. It was, last year, my great privilege to be present when, at

* Dr. Martineau's Reply will be found on page 89.

the Tercentenary Celebration of the University of Edinburgh, the special degree of *Doctor of Divinity* was conferred upon Dr. Martineau by that orthodox University. What I saw and heard during that celebration marked the strong influence he has been, and is now exerting, on the progress of religious thought in Scotland. A clergyman of its Established Church spoke to me of Dr. Martineau as "the greatest theologian of the age." And learning, as I have since done, that his writings are to be found in the manses of almost all the younger clergy of the three Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, I feel sure that those who know what those churches were thirty years ago, must recognise the immense value of his guidance to the new generation of their ministers.

The MAYOR then put the resolution to the meeting, which was passed unanimously.,,

Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor for the very kind manner in which he had opened the proceedings of the evening. They, as a body of Unitarians, were proud that they had a Martineau in the chair that night; and he felt proud every time he saw their religious body supplying the most prominent chair that could possibly be supplied by the citizens of Birmingham.

Mr. E. CLEPHAN, in seconding the vote, said that the Mayor of Birmingham was one of a long line of noble Mayors that had been produced by the Unitarian body. He thought he might say that the Unitarian body had furnished more mayors, aldermen, and magistrates in proportion to their numbers, than any other body.

The MAYOR, in replying, said:—Mr. Chairman, I, at the risk of offending against a rule which I laid down at the beginning of this meeting, must just say one word in acknowledgment of the vote you have so very kindly passed to me to-night. It has been a very great pleasure to me to be here amongst so many friends, and to do what I could in helping forward this great Conference. Some allusion has been made by the last speaker to the joy which he feels at seeing successive Unitarian Mayors in the borough of Birmingham. In our Council, however, we know no Unitarians and no Trinitarians. I am happy to say that we can work side by side with Churchmen and with Quakers, and with religious orthodox Dissenters, and that the only question with us is,—What is the view we take on public questions? and if we can agree in this, we will not inquire

about one another's social positions or religious opinions. I venture to think we are doing a great amount of practical work, and of Christian work, too. We are doing what we can to raise the poor, and make their lives happier and better; and I trust this is a work in which all sects and all parties can agree, and find a common ground upon which to stand. I thank you, once more, very heartily, for the vote that you have passed.

[The remainder of the evening was spent by the large assembly in most agreeable and friendly intercourse; conversation being occasionally pleasantly arrested while Miss Edwards or Mrs. Titterton sang, or Miss Robinson gave solo performances on the violin.]

DR. MARTINEAU'S REPLY.

[The Address to Dr. Martineau, having been engrossed and illuminated, was signed by the Mayor of Birmingham, Mr. Alderman Thomas Martineau, as Chairman of the Meeting, and also by the Secretaries of the Conference. It was forwarded so as to reach Dr. Martineau on his 80th birthday. The Secretaries have received the following Reply.]

To the Secretaries of the National Conference of Members and Friends of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other Non-subscribing or Kindred Congregations, recently held at Birmingham, viz., Rev. HENRY W. CROSSKEY, LL.D.; HARRY RAWSON, Esq.; Rev. S. ALFRED STEINTHAL; Rev. ALFRED WM. WORTHINGTON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—I can make no adequate acknowledgment of the address which you forwarded to me last evening, and can only say how deeply it has affected me. I will let its glowing words of approval give me their natural joy unquestioned. They may stand as the measure, not of my merits, but, what is far better, of my friends' generosity. In this sense alone do they belong to me.

On looking back over the remembered work of four-score years, I find it all summed up in the simplest of acts, the unreserved expression of whatever took hold of me as most true and good. In this there is no heroism: it is but "the life according to nature." And if, in following it, some response is gradually gained from other minds, it may be innocently grateful to an old man, as broadening the insight of his individual reason, and intensifying the faith of his lonely heart.

To the existence of a group of churches free in their constitution and open to the laws of natural change, I owe whatever scope has been given me for study and

teaching on subjects of Morals and Religion. It is, however, no mere personal gratitude that retains me in allegiance to their inherited principle ; but a conviction that the true religious life supplies grounds of sympathy and association deeper and wider than can be expressed by any doctrinal names or formulas ; and that free play can never be given to these genuine spiritual affinities till all stipulation, direct or implied, for specified agreement in theological opinion is discarded from the bases of Church Union. Aware as I am that many members of the recent Conference do not unconditionally concur in this conviction, I am the more touched by an expression of approval and affection which, in their case, involves an exercise of forbearance.

While the Will of "the Great Taskmaster" shall still hold me to this field of service, it is my hope and prayer to spend the remnant of my hours in the husbandry which alone has become familiar to my hand.

Believe me always, Dear Friends,

Yours with faithful affection,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

LONDON, *April 22nd, 1885.*



PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD DAY.

NOTWITHSTANDING a wet and winter-like morning, a large number of the attendants at the Conference gathered at half-past nine o'clock for the DEVOTIONAL SERVICE, with which the proceedings of Thursday commenced. It was held in the Large Lecture Theatre of the Midland Institute, which had been kindly provided for the meetings of the day by the Old Meeting Congregation, whose handsome new church was not yet ready for occupation. The service commenced with the hymn, "Not yet I love my God," after which, the Rev. R. Spears offered prayer, and addressed the meeting on the "Need for Faith as the Foundation of Church Life, and the dangers attendant on indifference and agnosticism." After a second hymn, "City of God, how broad and far," the Rev. Dr. Drummond read, as Scripture lessons, parts of Psalm cxvi. and John xiv. 15-27, and spoke on "The Peace of God." The service closed with the hymn, "God is my strong salvation," and a short prayer and benediction.

During a brief interval, there was a considerable accession to the members present, and the large hall continued well filled till the close of the proceedings.

MORNING SESSION.

After the hymn, "One holy church of God appears," the chair was taken by JOSEPH LUPTON, Esq., of Leeds, who said :—

LADIES and GENTLEMEN,—I am this morning taking this position, which your Committee have considerably and kindly conferred upon me—an honour which I did not wish for or seek, but which I feel proud to occupy,—because I am ever willing, as you know, to assist that great cause which is the object of this Conference. I must congratulate you and our Birmingham friends upon the splendid gatherings we have had. In spite of now and then a gloomy foreboding, I cannot but look with the brightest, and I think the most confident hope, that our churches, instead of looking down, are looking up. I believe we possess a great and important truth,—a truth which, I believe, there is no denying,—and I cannot but look forward, in God's good time, to see our churches even larger, and more numerous, and better attended than ever they have been in the past : and, having faith in our spiritual leaders,—and such a leader as I have listened to this morning,—I feel scarcely fitted (I say it with some diffidence, it somewhat unnerved me,) for taking this position, and presiding over you this morning. I felt so deeply impressed with the simple, beautiful words of Dr. Drummond ; and when our friend said he was "no prophet," I thought, "Yes, you are indeed a prophet—a prophet of no common character, and if the men of old were inspired, so also we have men to-day who are equally inspired." I listened, also, the night before last, to Dr. Sadler, and saw that large gathering at the Church of the Saviour deeply intent upon that holy service, and I thought then that we had leaders in Israel of whom we need never be ashamed. And I felt just the same when I saw rallying round our leaders the valued laymen of our body, and I thought, "These are hopeful signs of the future," although we may not see, as some would have them, our churches crowded. It is by no means a necessary sign of success—a crowded church. Believing the truths that we profess, and fearlessly and fervently speaking those truths, we must rejoice wherever those truths are received—whether it be in the Roman Catholic Church, the Wesleyan, the Society of Friends, the Established Church of England, or any other church. Wherever God sees fit to plant the truth, we ought to feel delighted and pleased. But I am not here to keep you from listening to the valuable papers which are going to be read by the Rev. J. C. Street and Mr. Charles W. Jones. Before calling upon these gentlemen, however, I should just like to say one word as to this Conference and the last. The last Conference was, to me, a most satisfactory sign of the times ; and I congratulate the

friends from Liverpool, to whom I would also say a kind and consoling word. For, since that time, we have lost a friend and minister whom we shall never any of us forget. I refer to my friend—and the friend of all who knew him—the Rev. Charles Perry, a man who was the life and soul, to a large extent, of that great gathering; and a man who has left his impress, not only in his own town, but upon our churches generally, and that impress will never be effaced. And those two volumes of sermons, which have been produced through the kindness of the Rev. R. A. Armstrong,—memorial volumes of our friend Mr. Perry,—all of you who can possibly possess those books, I beg you to do so. I have myself read them with intensest interest. Oh, my friends, if you only knew the value of those sermons, you would read them, and become acquainted with that beautiful character,—that man who was, indeed, truly inspired. And it was a mystery, indeed, that that man, who seemed so likely to have been of such value, should have been removed. With regard to this Conference, I cannot but feel that it is due from me, as Chairman this morning, to thank our Birmingham friends for the splendid reception accorded us this week, and for the kindness with which they have opened their doors to us. Our friend and excellent Secretary, Mr. Russell, too, deserves our warmest thanks; and I do thank him, and all those who have assisted him, for the care with which they have prepared for these grand and magnificent meetings; for we shall all go back to our various homes prepared for that true liberty and freedom for our churches, of which we are all so proud. I have now the pleasure of calling upon the Rev. J. C. Street, of Belfast, to read the first paper.

The Rev. J. C. STREET, of Belfast, then read the following paper on

THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCHES IN ITS PRACTICAL ISSUES.

THE word “Churches” in the title of this paper, qualified by the possessive pronoun “our,” shows that those who asked me to write a paper for to-day were not thinking of any sharp ecclesiastical distinctions or dogmatic fastnesses, but of the scattered groups of men and women found within the sweep of our religious developments whose bond of union is the “spirit of freedom,” and whose living communion is found in similarity of aims. This clears the way for me; for though I believe in “our Churches” in the sense of “our congregations,” I do not believe in “our Church,” in the sense of our ecclesiastical completeness and separateness from others. When, therefore, I use the word “Churches” in this paper, I shall simply mean “congregations,” and when I employ the word “our” in reference to them, I shall mean “those congregations unbound by dogmatic fetters, seeking the truth freely, and aiming to work for the

welfare of humanity." No doubt "our Churches" represent, separately and collectively, some forms of theological thought, as well as some distinct philosophical tendencies; but they have never formulated these, and could not wisely engage in any united propagandism of them. In these matters they have found their closest union among each other in the strength of their repudiation of the teachings of the dogmatic Churches around them. Various schools of thought have always existed among us. Our theological and philosophical differences have always been distinctly marked. Our differences have been our glory. We have never been in a position to establish a dogmatic propaganda. I am not sure that all our "theological missions," except so far as they have been individual in their character, have not been a mistake. We have always been clear and faithful in our protest against all fetters upon the mind, all theological teachings upheld and enforced by penalties, and every form of slavery to a tyrannous past; and we have always distinctly represented certain methods and principles, such as freedom of inquiry, the right of private judgment, the supreme authority of truth, and the everlasting beauty of righteousness. So that there has been a living unity which always left us free, and always made for freedom.

If, however, we could never be a school of theological teachers, nor a Church whose creed was defined and whose message to the world was completed, we have ever been a band of brothers and sisters impelled by deep reverence, and upborne by the necessities of our natures to a lofty spiritual worship. Up to the Highest our natures have soared. Out of the dim twilight of human thinking we have risen to the clear atmosphere of divine loving. Our congregations have been spiritual arks in which our souls found the "holy of holies." The incense of our worship has exhaled in a mingled fragrance of aspiration and praise. Sometimes, it may be, in our conflict with error, and in our individual crusades against creeds, we have been in danger of undervaluing this function of worship, and, to that extent, have lost a spring of inspiration and helpfulness which would at once have clarified our vision of truth, and revealed more clearly to us the sphere of our duty. But of late, so far as I am able to judge, we have laid less stress than ever upon dogma, and more upon Divine communion, and hence there has grown up among us a more intense desire not only to see more vividly the nature of our duties,

but to perform them with a more complete fidelity. No doubt the function of preaching is still of grave moment. Our life must speak through the cultured heart and intellect. The prophet's word, as of old, is a living necessity ; but the sphere of his inspiration is enlarged. He has now to address himself to the needs of a complicated civilisation, to find his illustrations rather from the living present than from the historic past, to interpret the divinest principles of religion in such a way that they shall apply directly to the common things of life, and to the practical issues that present themselves every day for consideration. But, however exalted the function of preaching, and however divine the attitude of worship, those are poor and incomplete churches which restrict themselves to the Sunday gatherings, though the preacher be inspired, and the worship divine. Churches which restrict themselves thus, though they may minister to useful purposes to a few, are practically stagnant, and unadapted to the needs of the age. Our Churches are neither theological fortresses, nor dim religious altars. To the extent that they try to be either they fail of their higher functions. They stand for distinct issues and principles wherever they are placed. They should be living streams issuing forth, like Nile waters, to irrigate and enrich the soil of human life.

Outside the theological function which our Churches may exercise, and growing out of, or enriched by their spiritual worship, there are distinct lines of work which they should follow, and which should in no direction be neglected. These may, for convenience, be classified as Educational, Benevolent, Social, and Political. If we have no organic unity which enables us to speak and act as a denomination, or a Church ; if we cannot issue authoritative dogmas, or exercise lordship over the minds of men, it does not follow that we cannot exercise a higher function, and sway a larger power.

I. In matters Educational we have a clear and distinct work. We are agreed that the development of the whole nature of man, and of each man, physically, intellectually, morally, and religiously, is a distinct gain, not only to the individual, but to the race. We have no reservations in this matter, and do not make distinctions between classes of men, as if some were to be trained merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water, while the gateways of the Cosmos were to be thrown open to others. To us

man is man. The soil of humanity is all cultivable, and by generous treatment and fitting opportunities we discover the rich soil, and win the fullest harvest. Hence, in every community our Churches should stand forth as the known, trusted, tried, and faithful friends of Education. The boy of the peasant and the peer, the girl of the millworker and the duchess alike, should claim from us the best we have, and the best we can command. Now, these are stirring times in matters of Education. Thanks to workers throughout the United Kingdom, and notably here in Birmingham, a new spirit has been born in the nation, and from the peasant's cottage, as well as from the prince's mansion, the school children go forth to a higher training than was possible to past generations. But the work is by no means complete. Our methods need development. We do not yet reach all, and we do not give our best. Interests, parties, prejudices, wrong-doing, still stand in the way. Our Churches should be Educational Centres, not simply in Sunday school and spiritual training, but in all the activities, aims, and efforts of those who are toiling for the Education of the world. Those who in Parliament, or in the study, are devising plans, amidst great discouragement, to make Education as widespread as our race, should always be able to feel that from our scattered Churches there would be warm and spontaneous support from tried and trusty friends.

If I am not mistaken, I have observed of late years, a development of this Educational feature, not simply in better Sunday school work, but in the support of National Education, in the enlargement of the schemes of higher Education, in the creation of organisations within ourselves for scientific, literary, and philosophical studies, and in the culture of musical taste, and the appreciation of art. This is as it should be, for our life should certainly show itself in fidelity to the widest Education.

II. Out of our religion should grow a true Benevolence, and the culture of those faculties which blossom forth in good deeds. This age is eminently characterised by the growth of benevolent enterprises. Out of the heart, I will not say merely of Christianity, but of religion, has sprung a living philanthropy which is every day trying to overleap all national, sectarian, or race boundaries, and to bless mankind. Naturally our Churches should be found in the van of all good movements. We

have no sufficient *raison d'être* if we are not among the very foremost in our benevolent activities. Our motto is, "all religion has relation to life," and we echo Swedenborg's words, "the life of religion is to do good." However we may be shut out by theological prejudices from some fields of labour, we are generally welcomed here. In all things human our place is definite enough. All are willing to let us toil to save the drunkard, to reform the criminal, to relieve the poor, to heal the sick, to visit the prisoner, and to feed the hungry. These things lie beyond the region of party and creed. It is our great field. Experience and observation alike tell that on this field we can win our noblest triumphs, and clothe our religion with its divinest garb.

It seems to me that while, as far as practicable, we should have in all our Churches means of benevolent activity to employ all who will be helpful—ministering to our own poor, and sick, and sorrowing—we should especially aim to make our way into the larger enterprises of philanthropy, to be felt as a strong motive power in all good movements, ready to check all sectarian and party limitations, prompt to stand forth for the outcast and neglected, pleading the cause of the buffeted and down-trodden, and staunchly to uphold the widest charities and the most unrestricted beneficence. In this way our Churches may inspire others, and uplift the charities of the age.

III. The tendency of much of the Church teaching of the day is to freeze up the social qualities, to make the lines of life rigid, and to stiffen and stilt the characters of those who are influenced by it. We can never be guilty of the crime of warfare against the social instincts. The happy faculty we possess of transmuting the events of the day into the gold of gladness is a living proof to us that the sunnier and cheerier aspects of life should be seen and enjoyed, and that we should strive to educate all we can reach into a happy appreciation of the joys which can easily and innocently be had. Our religion is in harmony with the sunshine, the music of birds, the murmur of waters, the inspiring breezes, the rhythm of glad motion. We put our devotion into our joys. So we can lift up and sanctify the pleasures of home and society, making music, song, art, and sweet intercourse, the handmaids of piety and the instruments of holiness. We can aim at making our young people win gladness even from the duties of life, and can temper with various sweetness the hard

lot which is the heritage of the poor. We can do much to encourage innocent amusements, to bring about the opening of museums, art galleries, parks, and sunny spots on the Sundays, to encourage musical tastes, the study of the works of nature, the practice of manly games, and the culture of all the physical nature, in such a manner as shall make it yield its ripest and gladdest fruits. All this will not be in hostility to, but in full harmony with our religion ; and we shall represent in every community a body of men who, for God's sake and for the welfare of man, aim at enlarging the joys and brightening the life of the toilers in our great hives of industry.

IV. It is manifest that those who would deeply influence the life of any community must play an important part in their political aspirations and activities. Politics run high in the United Kingdom, and men can be swayed by the political issues of the hour more powerfully than by anything else. To stand outside politics is to stand outside of the region in which men feel most deeply and can be stirred most effectually. Our churches have never been guilty of the folly of teaching that politics lie outside the sphere of religion. Our ministers and congregations have always felt that they had specific duties in regard to all the questions which arise involving the life, the welfare, the honour, and the happiness of the nation. We have always emphasised the fact that a truly religious man should be the most useful and active of citizens. Our people have ever been prominent politicians ; and if we have always been found in the van of the great Liberal Party, it has been because that party was most ready to tread in the path of reform, to redress abuses, to walk in the ways of righteousness, and to promote equal laws, just judgments, and perfect liberty. But our function is not so much to work with any one political party as it is to influence all parties, to raise the tone of political controversy and life, to set forth fundamental principles of right-doing, to hold up a standard of true morality and even-handed justice, to labour for the amelioration of the people's lot, the repression of crime, the removal of abuses and legalised temptations to vice ; and, as Mr. Gladstone once said, "to make it easy to do right and difficult to do wrong." To a great extent our liberal Churches have proved themselves as strongholds of freedom, centres of reformatory influences, and organised workers for the political welfare of the people. All great movements for the popular

good have found among us devoted advocates and generous supporters. The prophets of every good reform have confidently appealed to our Churches for support. Others might repudiate them ; but we were ever ready to stand up for the right, to fight for the oppressed, to undo the heavy burdens, to loose the shackles of tyranny, and to strengthen the hearts and hands that were feeling and toiling for human good. In these directions our Churches can carry on their religious work. Infusing into political life and activity the spirit of justice, always holding up a high moral standard of right, not carried away by the frenzies of the hour, or betrayed by passion into approval of wrong-doing, either in our internal or external relations as a people, we can exercise from our Church centres a religious influence which will be felt both in agitation and legislation, and lead to the establishment, on solid foundations, of that righteousness which alone exalteth a nation. It is right, therefore, that we should take an active part in political life, that we should not shrink from public work and public duties ; that on School Boards, in Councils, on the Bench, in Parliament, in the councils of the Queen, we should occupy such places as we can win, and thus prove that our Free Churches are not only in touch with the political life of the day, but in advance of the people, leading the way to ever better and nobler realities.

It may be said that I have left out of consideration the details of congregational life, and the special work which our congregations can do within their own borders ; but I have done so purposely, not because I do not recognise their value and importance, but because I felt sure they would never be neglected, and I wished to emphasise the larger work in which our practical energies might be usefully employed. Others can speak of missionary activities, of classes, and schools, and colleges ; of our literature and our denominational life ; —but I felt that I might venture, in brief words, to set forth the issues that would bring us out into the thronged regions of the world, in which, by the direct application of our principles and spiritual life, we could exercise a growing influence upon the age in which we live. Our rank and status in the religious world will not be determined by our theological or philosophical systems, nor by our denominational and sect-building activities, but by the fidelity with which we embody our principles in an active, healthy, and inspiring public life.

Mr. CHARLES W. JONES, of Liverpool, read the following paper on the same subject:—

I PRESUME that there is no difference of opinion as to what the practical issue of the work of the church ought to be. May we not take it that every church is working in its own way for the same end, viz., the Kingdom of God? It is the means, and not the end, about which we differ. It is only when we come to consider how, when, and where the kingdom is to be obtained, that we take separate paths. The orthodox churches look for it in some distant other world, whilst we believe that, but for our own faithlessness, it might be realised here and now. With their views the orthodox churches naturally tell the Christian to forget as much as possible the things of this world, and to keep his gaze firmly fixed upon the world to come. Our church, as naturally, urges him not to waste his precious time in speculations about an unknown future, but to spend his life in trying to improve the present, to throw his whole strength and energy into the attempt to make this world better, brighter, happier than he finds it.

My subject is too vast a one to deal with in the limits of a short paper, and, as you will no doubt think, too deep a one for a layman to grapple with at all. Perhaps, however, your time may not be entirely wasted in listening to what an ordinary layman has to say upon the subject, for it is, after all, for the most part, with ordinary laymen that you have to deal. In respect to this matter of the Kingdom of God, I know of only one teacher. You will tell me that he does not stand alone, that many came before him, and that many have come after him. That may be so—I take your word for it that it *is* so. I don't profess to be learned in these matters, and am not prepared to deny your assertion; but I repeat that for *me* there is but one; I seek for no other; for I want no more. I find in his precepts a complete guide to conduct in the individual life and in the dealings of man with his fellow-men. From beginning to end of Christ's teachings there is nothing wanting and nothing impracticable; nothing that might not with advantage be put into practice in our dealings with one another in our everyday life, in our business, as fellow-citizens, in our legislation for others, and in our dealings with foreign nations, provided that we ourselves, and those with whom we have to deal, were filled with his spirit. To infuse this spirit into the life of each individual is, it seems to me, the practical work of

every church, and it is a work which no church is better able to perform than ours. But we cannot hope to succeed until we realise that the only way to reform the world is to bring each individual man and woman to love and serve God and Christ and his fellow-men. Do not let us delude ourselves into the belief that the kingdom can be won in any other way.

The tendency of the age is to do everything on a large scale, and I cannot help fearing that we value too little the individual influence of man upon man. People talk as though it were only necessary to make the outward circumstances right, and then the inward perfection will follow as a matter of course. I do not share any such faith. On the contrary, I believe that you may educate the people, house them comfortably, remove their temptations to drink, give them equal political rights, nationalise the land, in short, carry out all the panaceas dear to the political heart, and then be as far from the Kingdom of God as ever. All these things will help you in your work, but without religious influence they will avail nothing. Yes, education even—the greatest blessing which this generation has conferred upon the people—without your guidance, may lead away from God instead of up to Him. There is an unbelief bred of ignorance and vice which may be cast out with drums and trumpets, banners and shouting. But there is an unbelief bred of knowledge, just as sad, and far more subtle and difficult to deal with.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and how few ever get more than a little! But I do not believe that any knowledge could hurt a man, that any researches into science would lead him away from God, if he were left alone. They would rather lead him up to God, as manifestations of his goodness and perfection. But the anxious seeker after truth is not left alone; every magazine and newspaper he takes up is full of insidious suggestions, put in all manner of tempting forms, filling his mind with doubts and difficulties which otherwise would never have entered his head. It is to you that we look to meet this new danger, which is gathering strength each day, and which, if not successfully fought against, will overwhelm and extinguish the religious life of the people.

Here, then, it seems to me, lies the practical work of *our* church. As the people become educated, they will demand of Religion that she shall present herself to them in a reasonable and rational form—one that squares with their highest aspirations after truth, and not a compound of

abstract formularies and impossible creeds. If, as a church, we are prepared to take up the task boldly, if we are willing to throw aside our prejudices in favour of a select intellectual sect, and are prepared to go forth to the people throughout the length and breadth of the land, sending our best ministers to preach to them the Gospel of Christ wherever and whenever we can collect them together, I have no doubt as to the victory being ours.

Turning now from generalities, let us consider the matter a little more in detail. And first let me explain, that in passing over the work done on the one hand by our regular congregations, and on the other by our Domestic Missions, I do so, not because I undervalue it—far from it; but my present object is to speak of the church in relation to that part of the population which neither organisation reaches, a class that will not enter our chapels, and that is not touched even by our Domestic Missionaries. And in dealing with this class even, we fortunately need not be content with mere theorising. That the work can be done, and that our views in regard to God and Christ will be received gladly, has already been proved beyond a doubt. It is many years now since a minister in my own town left his chapel for a public hall, and there drew together a class of hearers which he could not bring into his own place of worship. Last month he completed another series of six services in the public hall. They were precisely the same as those held in the chapel, and the addresses were of a deeply religious character. Not the slightest attempt was made to attract in any shape or form, yet the hall was filled every evening to its fullest extent. At the last service each person was presented with the chapel calendar for the ensuing month, and would find there announced a course of lectures with titles far more catching than anything which had been given in the hall. With what result? That on the following Sunday evening the chapel was no fuller than usual, the congregation numbering 500, against 1,200 in the hall. Where were the 700?

Take another case. I visited recently a midland town, for the purpose of seeing for myself what was being done there in the same direction. In the morning I attended the service in the chapel, and found it, although only a very moderate sized building, not more than about one third full. In the afternoon I attended the same preacher's service in a public hall, and found there a congregation of over a thousand. Again,

in the evening, of from 2,000 to 2,500. And here again I would particularly emphasise the fact, that there was not the slightest attempt to attract the people in any way whatever. The service was on exactly the same basis as the one I had attended in the chapel, and the addresses simple earnest expositions of scriptural texts: "Bear ye one another's burthens," and "Work out your own salvation." I had been told that the people were got together by means of a brass band. Well, if that were so, all I can say is, that they must be mightily easily pleased, for a poorer apology for a band I never listened to. It consisted only of seven instruments which accompanied the singing, and had, I was informed, been adopted with great reluctance, in consequence of the harmonium not being powerful enough to fill the vast hall and keep the singing together. I have not the slightest doubt that the promoters of those services would gladly dispense with the "band," if some one would provide them with such an organ as we have in our chapels. Sure I am of this, that such an instrument would answer the purpose of an "attraction" (were any needed) far better than the cornet, &c., now in use. Looking round the hall one could see at once that the congregation was composed of working men and women, and it was easy to judge by their faces that they came to join in religious worship, and not merely out of curiosity to hear something new. Nothing could exceed the orderliness and quietness of their behaviour. You felt that you were one of an assembly of fellow-worshippers praying to the Universal Father in heaven, members of the same family upon earth, brethren of the same Christian church. There was, by the way, one regulation which might with advantage be adopted in our more fashionable churches and chapels. As soon as the clock struck seven, the doors were closed, and a notice put up announcing the commencement of the service, after which no one was allowed to enter. What a comfort it would be to those of us who take the trouble to be in time, if that rustling of skirts and opening of doors after the first prayer could be prevented!

This, then, is the direction in which I believe our church must move, if it means to take its share in the work of regenerating the people. I have heard it said that it is not necessary,—nay, further, that it is not desirable,—because there is still plenty of room in our chapels for any who care to come, and that any who really do care will come; that by

going outside we shall weaken the congregational life inside. As to the first objection, I would only point out that the people the church ought to reach are precisely those who do *not* care, that vast mass which, so far as outward appearances go, has no religion at all. As to the second objection, I should be the last person to advocate anything which would weaken our present congregational life. This work, if taken up, must be a separate institution, undertaken by special ministers appointed for the purpose. It must not be thrown upon the already overworked ministers of our regular congregations. All we ought to ask of them is, that they will give the movement their sympathy and occasional personal help, so that the people amongst whom they live and labour may feel that the religious teaching given to them is that of men whom they have learned to love and honour as their friends.

In conclusion, I should like clearly to explain that, in pressing this matter upon the attention of the Conference, I do not do so as a mere question of numbers. It is not that we can get together more people outside than we can inside our chapels. It is because there undoubtedly are people—I care not whether they are many or few—whom neither we nor any other church can gather into the fold through the ordinary channels. Still less do I advocate it because it will add to the power or numerical strength of our sect. I am not one of those who object to being called Unitarian. I think the name describes my theological standpoint pretty correctly, but I care nothing at all about Unitarianism as a mere sect. The only church that I care for is the Church of Christ, and any poor help that I can render to the particular sect to which I belong, or to the particular chapel in which I worship, is not given from any sectarian motive, but because it is the work which lies nearest to my hand; and, in doing it, I would fain hope that I am hastening on, be it ever so little, the establishment of the Universal Church of God. By throwing our whole hearts and souls into this work, by giving it all the personal and pecuniary help which lies in our power, we shall, I feel persuaded, be doing something towards founding God's Kingdom upon earth, by enabling earnest and devout preachers to plant here and there, in the souls of men and women, a true sense of the Fatherhood of God, of the majesty of duty, and a desire to follow in the footsteps of Christ. If we have any faith in purity and goodness, we must believe in the

influence that they spread around. Who can measure the effect of even one pure and God-fearing life spent in the dark wastes of sin and misery of our great cities ; and may we not believe that the preacher may touch a heart here and there, fanning into flame the goodness that is only smouldering for want of the breath of God's spirit. "The harvest, truly, is plenteous, but the labourers are few." Yes, the labourers *are* few ; but is that a legitimate reason for keeping them to work in our gardens so that we may live amongst flowers and fruit, whilst, for want of their sickles, the golden harvest outside our walls is falling to the ground untended and uncared for ? Let us pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest, and let us esteem it a privilege that we are allowed to partake of the divine work by equipping the labourers for their holy and arduous task.

Mr. T. CHATFIELD CLARKE, in opening the discussion, said :—I do not think there is a single passage in either of the papers we have just listened to with which I am not in fullest sympathy ; and, therefore, if you imagine that I am about to debate the matter, or enter into any discussion on points of difference, you will be disappointed. But I do not so conceive of the object of this Conference. I conceive that its object is rather a sympathetic exchange of each others' thoughts than discussion. We meet here as brethren of scattered churches, to strengthen each other in the bonds of sympathy, but also in the issues of practical work ; and therefore I could not, if I would, say anything to derogate from those two admirable papers you have listened to so attentively. Sir, I feel the question brought forward in those papers to be, indeed, one of the most serious questions of this body. No church can do effective work without a minister at its head deeply impressed with the importance of his mission, giving his life up in deep sincerity to the work of God, and impressed not only from the feeling of the nobility of his mission, but often struggling under much care and under some sorrow in the disappointments that arise in the course of his ministry. I do not agree quite with a few words I heard otherwise this morning. I think a minister should be a man who has arrived at the everlasting truth through his own diligent research ; who has proved to himself, and is thereby enabled to prove to any young person under his influence, that the highest truths of religion can only be gained by weighing these questions from all sides. If our ministers are not able to meet the doubts of the young, to sweeten their affections, and bring them closer and closer to the mind of Christ, they will assuredly fail in directing the youth of this country. If, however, they are devoted to the life of Christ ; if they are in that spirit in which we all hope to rest—in the peace of God ; if, as Professor Drummond says, they "rest in that peace," then, truly, they will address the young

with power ; and it is to the young we must look for the future development of our church. I would say this, then, that it appears to me that the minister should, in the first place, take counsel with the elders of his church as to what are the best practical means of carrying on the work of the church. It is, unfortunately, the case, that a minister from the north does not often understand the difficulties of a congregation in the south ; and, therefore, I think they should take into counsel those elders of their own church who are capable of observing the difficulties, and helping them, and who, from their local knowledge, very often know the best way of aiding them. But, having once taken these elders into counsel, they should make demands upon their purse and their time, and should say, "To you I look for the strengthening element." Having once secured the services of the elders, I think he should then turn round, and say, "My work now must lie with the younger members." You cannot touch them until they have learned to endure, and you have engraved on their hearts the necessity of surrendering their lives to duty. Now, if you can do this, what is your work with the younger people ? Why, surely it must be known to this great assembly that the position of the Church of England, in the present day, arises from her good works. How is she endearing herself to the hearts of the people of this country ? Why, by her blessed and redeeming work, in many a country town, and village, and hamlet. We must all rejoice in that work ; and though I, for one, may share a strong political feeling against the establishment of that church, we rejoice to-day that *all* the churches, orthodox and otherwise, are throwing themselves into the work of the redemption of humanity, through innumerable channels of good. I, the other day, knowing that I was going to speak here, put myself into communication with the minister of one of the leading churches of London, Dr. Newman Hall. He sent me, in his own hand-writing, prepared with the greatest care, a list of the number of agencies that are connected with that church ; and I assure you that their name is legion. They take in social evenings, home clubs, mothers' meetings, savings banks, special services, bands of hope, and every other agency of a good and moral character. And all this is carried on by *one* church in London. Now, shall I tell you how I could prove to my own mind the extent of the influence of Dr. Newman Hall in a great city like London ? (I only mention it here in order to evidence to you what a work is being carried on by him). I was with Dr. Newman Hall, passing along in a carriage one day through an immense crowd ; and the people continually and heartily recognised him as he passed, for they cried out, "Oh, there's Newman Hall ! there's Newman Hall !" They recognised him like a friend and a brother, and that perfect ovation which he called forth was a tribute of the hearts and minds of those honest operatives standing round him. Ladies and Gentlemen, very sincerely I agree with my excellent friend here, that our work as a church does not end here ; and I had jotted down the very lines of thought that he has laid down, ending with the view that our churches should let their outlook be benevolent and educational ; that we should take our stand in every town and neighbourhood ; and especially try to work conjointly with

the orthodox bodies. It would have a doubly good effect, if we did ; for they would begin to see that, though our theological principles may differ, we are one with them in Christian work. Of course, if we cannot get them to join with us, our duty is to go on alone. But we certainly ought to recognise that our duty does not allow us to rest merely dumb. We must be more or less, in each town, the pioneers of religious equality, earnestness, sympathy, practical work, and organised benevolence. I have little more to say, except that the object of Mr. Jones's paper comes very near to my heart ; and I say this, that I have had a striking illustration of it in my own experience. At a meeting which I was conducting, a working man got up and said, " I have not the slightest resentment towards religion ; but I don't care for the dogmatic religion of the church." Now, I think that was an evidence that, at some near day, we shall be able to get preachers with an outspoken, manly expression of religion, and with no special dogma of Calvinism, or what not, who shall do a great good work among the people outside the churches. The question is, how are we to get up such a great mission ? Our congregations, large and small, should consider these centres of influence, like our friend Mr. Hopps, who is making his religious influence felt by a large operative class down at Leicester. I would counsel that, in each town, some plan of this kind should be tried by the minister or ministers residing there. We have tried it in London, both on a large scale and on a somewhat smaller scale ; and we will try it again and again. I am persuaded that you cannot succeed in getting at these classes, if you will not try and get them first into some public hall, and do something for them to make them feel the influence of religion. Whether it re-acts on the chapel or pew, or not, do not let that be the object. I know it is deeply felt by the Unitarian body, as a whole, that it is their duty thus to try to lift these people up to God, and draw them closer and closer to the mind of Christ.

Mr. E. CLEPHAN said :—Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I suppose I may be allowed to make just a few remarks in allusion to the two papers read yesterday morning by Mr. Hopps. I hoped that Mr. Hopps was going to read a paper upon his own special work ; but it frequently happens that we take up some other subject than is expected, and Mr. Hopps took up the subject of the personal consecration of ministers and congregations, leaving the practical issues for the papers of this morning. Many years ago, when Joseph Barker was rapidly going through the ranks of Unitarianism, I heard him preach a most remarkable sermon on the power of the Unitarian faith to convert the whole world to rational Christianity. He fully believed in that. It was, as I say, a very remarkable sermon ; and after the service was over, some of the gentlemen of the chapel where he preached met him in the vestry, and he pursued, with his usual warmth, the subject, and, pointing to some of them, he said, " You, and you, and you, ought to go out into the highways, and preach Unitarianism, and convert the whole world." Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Joseph Barker was, naturally, of a somewhat hard and argumentative frame of mind, and it was not with those attributes that he was likely to win the sympathies of a congregation, and attract the people generally to his views. I have an old friend who

had a great passion for the cultivation of exotic plants, and he succeeded, because he made himself acquainted with those requirements which are exactly fitted for their growth ; and he succeeded because of this acquired knowledge. He would have made a grand missionary, because he would have gone amongst the people, studied their habits and character generally, visited them in their homes, and seen what were their needs and necessities. Well, now, that is very much the problem that we have to solve. We want to know what will make all great movements successful. Now I would not have intruded this matter upon this Conference, were it not that I come from that central town (Leicester) which has been alluded to this morning, where the public services to the people have, in a large measure, succeeded. You may want to know the reason of the success of this movement. I will tell you what it is that makes this a particular success ; and what makes this a success, would make others similarly so. It is that a teacher must work in this way—by great earnestness, great simplicity, and in the full belief that what he is saying is true ; and he must show that he thinks it to be so. He must also be a man who mixes largely with his fellow-men, who has strong sympathies with them, who understands them, and takes a part in all their undertakings. With such qualifications as these, a man will readily gain the ear of the people, and in proportion as he is fully in earnest and upright in his character, then I think he will succeed. Such a man may belong to any denomination ; but if he holds the simple faith that we profess, if he has a firm belief in God, the power of God's Holy Spirit, and the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and of all human beings, he must succeed. It is well not to expect too much from these large gatherings. Take them at their true value, and don't expect too much, for if you do, you will be disappointed. I have observed these matters, not only in my own town, but in many others, and they have always given disappointment where too much was expected. But I was going to say this, that in my own town, or any other town, you may gather large numbers together in some public hall, and have them come there from Sunday to Sunday, as it suits them. They like to come and go as they please, and they object to the restraints of any organised church. There are occasionally men and women who become habituated to public worship in this manner, and they will detach themselves from these large gatherings, and become respectable and useful members of organised churches. But these instances are rare. I will conclude my remarks with this observation, that, with the great mass of the people, you will only gain their ear if you have a full belief yourself in what you are saying ; if you will show them that you are earnest and sincere, and have no ulterior motive in gathering them together ; if you will impart to them some spiritual belief, and show them how they may be better, and gentler, and kinder, and happier ; and if you can make them more forbearing and more considerate towards one another, you have done a great thing. If you have done all this, you have helped to build up a movement that will be the regeneration of large numbers of our fellow-creatures.

Mr. I. M. WADE, of London, said :—Sir, I, also, have to begin with a regret. I

regret exceedingly that our President—the President of the Sunday School Association—has, through illness, been unable, not only to take the chair yesterday, but to be present to-day, on behalf of the Sunday School Association. I have further to regret that our Treasurer, Dr. Blake Odgers, is also not present. It falls to my lot, therefore, as it often does, to fill a gap,—in the best way I can, that is. But I think you will agree with me, that we have not had too much of the Sunday School element introduced at this Conference. As one, at least, of the practical issues of “the life of our churches,” it does not deserve, in a three days’ campaign, to be utterly ignored. There are nearly thirty thousand scholars in our schools, officered by nearly four thousand teachers. That is an army corps in itself, and, if we know how to lead it, it seems to me that many of the vacant places in our chapels, which we now lament to witness, will be very speedily filled. Well, Sir, I submit, then, that one of the *most* practical issues in our church life is that of the Sunday School, when we have better learned how to manage it. A great deal has been said about the way to get at the multitude—the multitude that are going nowhere. Why, Sir, is there a better way of getting at the people than through the rising multitude which throng our schools, than by training them up in Christian principles and Christian doctrine, throwing around them all the tenderest care and interest and love we are capable of, and training them up into close membership with the church? There is a gentleman now on the platform who could best show us the way that this is to be done. He would go to a chapel, find it nearly empty, and, after a very few months’ labour, fill it with crowded young life. After a time, he has voluntarily gone to another barren church, and filled that; he has then had built on the top of his chapel additional room for his school, and filled that; he has then purchased two adjoining cottages, thrown them into school rooms, and filled them to overflowing. Not satisfied with that, he has then gone to another outlying district, taken a hall which everybody avoided, cleaned it up, and soon filled that. Now, he has not merely filled these buildings with school children, but with the parents also, who come together to worship in the evening. He trains up the elder scholars to become teachers, and they also attend the chapel services. Surely, we see in the lead of this minister the way in which the interests of our church may best be promoted! His last act has been to go down to another sadly-neglected neighbourhood, and open a handsome hall, which, after only a few months’ experience, he is in a fair way also of filling, morning and evening. Now, if *these* are not “practical issues,” which our church-life may well spend some enthusiasm in promoting, I should like this Conference to tell me of a better. Sir, we want to feel ourselves knit together in a common *cause*,—we have no united purpose in view, and hence our failure in so many lamentable instances. Mr. Street said a great deal about our congregations uniting for benevolent purposes; he seems to repudiate the word church, Christian or otherwise, and so missed the very point his paper was meant to enforce, and the object this Conference was intended to promote, namely, union of our churches for Christian doctrine and work. Are our churches to be always dis-

associated, and never united in any great cause, except practical benevolence? Why, do not other churches practise benevolence to ten times the extent, as churches, that we do? I will venture to say that you may go into any of the orthodox churches or chapels, and you will find they are all doing infinitely more work in this way than we are; and, adding to their interest in schools, home missions, and numerous other philanthropies near at hand, care for the heathens all over the world. But we have no foreign missionaries; we do not support foreign institutions; and when we want to point to anything like collective life in our churches, our schools and our domestic missions are the only objects which present themselves. Shame on us, that even these are not better supported! I was looking at that noble statue of George Dawson, yesterday, and, as I looked into his face, I remembered nearly the last time I had the great pleasure of sitting at the same table with him. We got upon the question of the Unitarian position in the religious world, when he illustrated, in his keen, brilliant, and incisive way, by a simple diagram, where we formerly were and where we then stood. It was not very flattering to our self-complacency, certainly; for whereas, whilst he gave us credit, at one time, of being in the van of religious thought and action, he was of opinion that we had latterly fallen much to the rear, and had been simply rusting, whilst we thought ourselves only resting. There was no corporate union amongst us, he said; no earnest missionary spirit; we were more intent on discussing the Unitarian name than in propagating Unitarian principles, and so disintegration was fast setting in, and our efficiency, as a branch of the great Christian Church, was being impaired. I thought this a just view, then, and I think so still, and am not sorry that the sight of his statue called his words to my memory.

Mr. Wade was understood to be showing how the school might be made to result in constant and natural issues to the church by the adoption of such methods with the elder scholars as had been practised, with so much success, at Kidderminster; Renshaw Street, Liverpool; Stockport, and other places, when the Chairman's bell rang, and the exigencies of time bade him stop.

The Rev. C. J. STREET, M.A., of Glasgow, said:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am exceedingly sorry to interfere with the continuance of Mr. Wade's remarks, but I am quite sure that our Sunday Schools will not be forgotten, and that we shall all go away from this grand meeting determined to make their success in the future even greater than before. I should never have stood here, unless I felt that a word ought to be spoken before this Conference closes—a word, too, which I could speak, on behalf especially of the younger race of our ministers, who are filled with as much enthusiasm as ever our predecessors were, and who are determined to make our cause a more living success than ever. It seems to me that I have only to give utterance to what is in the minds of many at this Conference—that we ought to put forward, more than we do, the necessity for *missionary work*. I was thankful to you, Mr. Chairman, for the word with which you began the discussion to-day. It seemed to me to strike a note which went to our hearts at once. We have had too much carping criticism in our midst; and we are tired of lugubrious prophecies and

bewailings. There are many here to-day who are determined to make our church of the future a living, growing church, greater than ever it has been in the past. Our church is going to *succeed*, Sir, and we are resolved to make it do so. The only difficulty is, that while plenty of ministers and laymen are willing to work, they are not furnished with the sinews of war, as they ought to be. Grants to old and struggling causes are being reduced; new churches cannot be established for want of funds. We want, therefore, our wealthy laymen in every town—and especially may I mention Birmingham—we want them to supply us who are anxious to work with the means of making the work successful. What some people are spending upon a dinner party or a banquet, would keep a congregation going for a year; and if they would only understand the earnestness and solemnity of the problem before us, they would surely be ready to help us more thoroughly and readily than they do. I do not think that half of these people know what there is to be done. In Birmingham, the work does not, perhaps, need so much assistance as in other places. The only way we can hold our own in many centres is when other friends who are richer support us, and stand at our backs. And that is what we now ask of all those who are in a better financial condition than we. I could tell them of town after town where forty or fifty members could be got to join a liberal church; but we are not able to make them into a united band, and keep them together, because we have not the means to do it. Especially when we get amongst the working classes, we want your help and sympathy with us. I, therefore, make a most earnest appeal to all our friends who are able to do so, that they should support us in every way, rather than cause our ranks to become thinner, impair the churches already existing, and prevent others from being formed. The people are ready to listen to us, and we are ready to work; then let our wealthier brethren supply the willing workers with the means for carrying on their work. I make no apology for speaking so strongly, for I felt the need for that word was very great, and I should have been sorry if this great and inspiring Conference had separated without its having been spoken.

Mr. HARRY RAWSON then read the following

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE AS TO THE SUSTENTATION FUND.

On the third day of the National Conference held at Liverpool, on the 18th, 19th, and 20th April, 1882, a paper, prepared at the request of the Conference Committee, was read, entitled, “Ministers’ Stipends and Augmentation Funds.”

The design of the writer was threefold:—1st, to ascertain authentic

particulars as to the stipends then being paid ; 2nd, to obtain information “as to the existing means—by funds, endowments, and societies—for augmenting the incomes of ‘poor and deserving ministers of the gospel,’ and for aiding them and their families in other ways” ; and 3rdly, to consider what further measures towards this desirable end it might be expedient to adopt ?

It is unnecessary here to repeat particulars which are to be found in the “Report of the Conference.” The result of the information supplied, and the arguments advanced for some additional effort, was an interesting discussion, in which Mr. C. H. James, M.P. (the Chairman of the day), Mr. Wm. Rathbone, M.P., and other gentlemen, took part. Mr. Rathbone,—in the course of an earnest speech,—remarked that “it was impossible for us to do justice to our ministers without one of two things,—either large endowments, or a large and liberal Sustentation Fund. You have heard,” he said, “how deadly the effect of endowments is upon religious life. A Sustentation Fund, given year by year, by the voluntary efforts of any religious body, has just the opposite effect,—it stimulates religious life ; it brings different congregations into communication with each other, and thereby greatly benefits both giver and receiver. . . . It must be no question of mere doles. If we are to do it all, we must do it on a sufficient scale.” Mr. Rathbone cordially endorsed the limitation of help to congregations where there is evidence of vitality, and the requirement of a simultaneous and proportionate effort on the part of the assisted congregation. At the close of the speeches, the following resolution, moved by the Chairman, and seconded by Mr. Rathbone, was passed unanimously, viz., “That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that a Sustentation Fund be established, in addition to the funds that now exist, for the augmentation of the Stipends of Ministers,—and that the resolution be referred to the Conference Committee.” A gentleman in the meeting at once generously promised £1000. towards the Fund ; and other acceptable offers were spontaneously made.

The Conference Committee took immediate steps to discharge the duty thus assigned to them. A scheme was prepared for the establishment and management of a Sustentation Fund, which was subsequently modified in accordance with suggestions made by various friends. A canvass

for subscriptions was begun ;—and in due course about 230 contributors were summoned to a general meeting in University Hall, London, on the 25th April, 1883. At that meeting the scheme of the Committee was approved and adopted ; managers and officers were appointed in accordance with its provisions,* and authority was given them to draft a code of Regulations,—in preparing which the Board of Managers received very valuable aid, most courteously and gratuitously rendered by T. Smith Osler, Esq., LL.B.

These Regulations, with some modifications, were adopted at a General Meeting of Contributors, held at University Hall, London, on the 27th of June, 1883. The object of the fund was declared to be, “to aid, in the maintenance of faithful and efficient ministers, such Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other Non-Subscribing or kindred Congregations in the United Kingdom, as regularly assemble for the Public Worship of God.” In addition to the Regulations, the Board prepared a short code of By-Laws for its own guidance ; and drew up a Form of Application from Congregations, and a few questions to be answered by their ministers.

By the ensuing Christmas, *i.e.*, in about a year and a half from the adoption by the Conference of the scheme, promises of donations had been received to the amount of £13,306. 0s. 1d., and by the adjourned meeting of Contributors, in the following June, there was a list of subscriptions, to be spread over a series of years, amounting to £639. 13s. for five years, and £76. 6s. for shorter periods, besides annual subscriptions amounting to £368. 16s.

Messrs. Tate, Nettlefold, Ainsworth, and Clarke were appointed Trustees of the Fund ; and the amount of £10,017. 19s. 6d., out of a total of £14,316. 8s. 11d. received by the Treasurer up to the 31st of December, 1883, was invested in their names in carefully selected securities. The total of the contributions to the Fund, up to December, 1884, is £16,033. 17s. 3d., of which £13,986. 13. 3d. is in donations, and the remainder in subscriptions of various amounts and for different periods.

It has been deemed desirable to publish the particulars of grants made to congregations which have successfully applied for assistance ; and in

* See page 116.

the current Report a list will be found of all the grants made since the establishment of the Fund.

It may here be pointed out that, in the administration of this Fund, it is to the congregation, and not, as in the case of most other funds, to the minister, that the grant is directly made. It was thought that, in this way, a greater stimulus might be given to the efforts of the members of our various societies, and their interest be promoted in the comfort of their ministers. It is stipulated that, as a condition of aid, there shall be a simultaneous increase of pecuniary means from the congregation itself; and that the grant (of which the minimum is £20.) shall always be appropriated *solely* to the augmentation of the minister's stipend. In every instance, the grant is for the current year only.

There is reason to believe that, in many cases, these regulations have exercised a highly beneficial influence. Letters have been received from most of the congregations aided in this manner, expressing their satisfaction with, and gratitude for, the encouragement and stimulus they have thus obtained. One correspondent writes:—"I am requested by the congregation to acknowledge, with many thanks, your kind grant of twenty pounds in augmentation of our minister's stipend, and to state that that amount will be paid to him in addition to the £150.,—thus making his stipend into £170. for the year 1884." Another, who represents a very poor congregation, says:—"We comply with the condition, *i.e.*, we shall increase our minister's salary by £5. from ourselves, and are very thankful for your grant." Another,—“Our small congregation unanimously thank you for your kind donation of £20., and are glad and willing to fall in with your condition by an additional subscription.” And the following will suffice to represent the feelings of the ministers:—"Very sincerely I thank the Managers of the Sustentation Fund for the generous grant made to my congregation for the current year. Such an augmentation of my stipend is, indeed, a help, for which I am truly grateful."

It may here be mentioned that £1255. has hitherto been paid in grants; and that about the same sum can be advantageously employed annually.

Such are the main facts concerning the initiation, the establishment, and the present position of this Fund. In its administration, the Managers are not confined to any geographical limit; but, inasmuch as the North of England is largely provided for by the Augmentation Fund

projected and established at Liverpool by the late Mr. Christopher Rawdon, the operations of its successor have mostly taken effect in the South of England, in Wales, and in Ireland. It has been deemed inexpedient to draw any hard and fast line ; and this is happily rendered unnecessary by the harmonious co-operation of the Managers of these and other Funds which have the same, or similar, important objects in view, —differing somewhat, as they may, in their modes of action.

Although very grateful for the support hitherto accorded to the Sustentation Fund, the Managers cannot regard its success as assured, until at least £20,000. of invested capital have been realised ; and a subscription list considerably larger than that which has so far been obtained. They indulge the hope that the present Conference may, by new and increased aid, give a fresh impetus to the cause which was begun by its predecessor in Liverpool.

It will be the conscientious aim of the Managers to administer this Fund in conformity with the accepted principles of its projectors. They will not overlook the fact that it was proposed at a meeting of non-subscribing churches ; and that, therefore, an open trust and a free communion are essential conditions to the receipt of its grants. Members of a group of worshipping societies, in which a learned and well-equipped ministry is a cherished tradition, they will always regard faithful and efficient ministers thus trained as having the most urgent claim upon their resources. The condition of a simultaneous effort on the part of the assisted congregations will, it is hoped, preclude any mistaken idea that this Fund partakes of the nature of a charitable institution. It cannot be too clearly understood that each grant is made on its own merits ; for the current year only ; and that no claim for a repetition of it on any other grounds can be recognised. Only by a stringent observance of this principle will it be possible to prevent the Sustentation Fund from assuming the functions of an Endowment,—than which nothing could be farther from the intentions of its founders, or more detrimental to its success.

In conclusion, the Managers would make an earnest appeal for an extended sympathy with the objects which they seek to promote, and a larger meed of pecuniary assistance. The aid and encouragement already afforded by the Fund have amply justified the anticipation that, “wisely

and well administered, it would lift a load of care from many anxious hearts, and prove twice blessed,—‘blessing him that gives and him that takes.’ ”

** Sustentation Fund.—Provisional Board, appointed 25th April, 1883.*

Mr. D. AINSWORTH, M.P.

Mr. C. H. JAMES, M.P.

Mr. T. CHATFIELD CLARKE

Mr. C. W. JONES

Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON

Mr. DAVID MARTINEAU

Mr. HERBERT NEW

Mr. HARRY RAWSON

Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY

Rev. J. P. HOPPS

Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON,

Dr. JAMES RUSSELL then read the following Statement as to

THE WORK OF THE MINISTERS' BENEVOLENT SOCIETY FROM 1855 TO 1885.

BEFORE I proceed to the immediate subject of my paper, it may not be uninteresting to Mr. Rawson if I briefly state the result of a comparison which curiosity induced me to make between the returns of Ministers' Stipends in 1851, in reply to my father's inquiries, when proposing to establish our present Society, and those received by Mr. Rawson himself for 1881, thirty years later, and published in his valuable paper. The comparison is approximative only, for reasons which will be very obvious, but it has much interest from its affording evidence of a considerable improvement in the matter of Ministers' Stipends, during the thirty years which intervene between the two dates. My father received replies from 158 congregations, situated, with two exceptions, in England and Wales; the exceptions related to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Mr. Rawson dealt with 253 congregations more widely distributed. Very briefly, the most important differences are what follow.

In 1851, out of 158 congregations one only raised a stipend so high as £400. ; in 1881, according to Mr. Rawson's report, nineteen out of 253 congregations,—thirteen of the nineteen being down for £500. and upwards ; yet in my father's list I find most of the towns in which our principal congregations reside. Of my father's 158 congregations, four only gave stipends between £300. and £400. ; twenty, of Mr. Rawson's 253 congregations. A remarkable increase is to be observed in Mr. Rawson's return

of stipends ranging between £150. and £300. ; he reports 113 among his 253 congregations, my father only twenty-five out of his 158. In stipends between £100. and £150. the larger proportion belongs to my father's returns, forty-four of 158 congregations against fifty-six of 253 congregations. But my father's list contains a very large proportion of the low stipends below £100. There were eighty-four congregations giving these small stipends out of his 158 congregations, whilst Mr. Rawson found forty-five out of his 253. This difference is in part occasioned by certain of the smaller congregations having ceased to exist during the intervening thirty years ; for I find in the Almanac for 1882 that sixteen of these smaller chapels which appear in my father's list are either absent altogether, or are entered as "closed," whilst two others depend on supplies ; and three years later, in the Almanac for the present year, five other of my father's smaller chapels appear as "closed," and one as depending on supplies.

The society on whose behalf I now appear is supplementary to the one which was the subject of the last paper ; neither can supply the place of the other. How successfully soever we promote an augmentation of the minister's stipend, still little will have been done towards enabling the minister to provide for the future. We can hardly anticipate that any aid which may be supplied to those ministers with whom these societies are concerned will be sufficient to place them in a position for providing against the accidents of life, or for making preparation for meeting its inevitable decline, when the minister finds himself no longer able to continue the honoured labour in which his best years have been passed. A life of ill-requited labour, spent in the noblest career in which the human mind can be employed, is sufficiently hard to bear : but how much heavier must be the burden when the minister contemplates the uncertainty hanging over the future of those around whom his dearest affections are gathered, and how often must the weight of the burden be increased, and may I not add his sense of humiliation be aroused, when some brother falls out by the way, and he hears of the petition for help going round on behalf of wife and children left unprovided for ? It was considerations of this character that suggested to the late Mr. Russell the formation of our present society. He knew that a fund conducted on insurance principles could not meet the case ; that a premium paid to an

insurance office, of sufficient amount to secure an adequate return, was far out of the reach of those of whom he was thinking; and that the various causes which would give rise to incapacity did not admit of calculation.

The Ministers' Benevolent Society has now been in active operation exactly thirty years, its first grant having been made in March, 1855, three years after its formation. Since that period, it has responded favourably to applications for benefit from eighty-two ministers or their families—viz., from forty-six ministers, thirty-three widows, and three families. I will now ask your attention to the circumstances under which these applications have been made. I take first a group of nineteen ministers incapacitated by age or natural infirmity, reckoning sixty-five years as commencing the period during which incapacity may be referred to advancing life; probably a rather low limit, and yet one-half of the group had not reached the age of seventy, a circumstance readily explained by the fact that these ministers, with hardly an exception, belonged to our poorer congregations; many of them holding a plurality of cures, but in how different a sense from that usually connected with the phrase. Out of sixteen of these nineteen ministers, nine were without any means of support, and only four of the remaining seven possessed an income exceeding £25. One of these ministers, aged sixty-six, described himself as worn out by a life of incessant labour carried on since 1836; he ministered to five small congregations. Another gentleman, who had had charge of four congregations, told a similar tale; and a high authority bore testimony that there were "few ministers more deserving, if a life of hard labour be taken into the account, especially in connection with the small income he received."

Perhaps more pathetic is the case of several among the remaining group of twenty-seven ministers who have been compelled to seek the aid of the society on account of disease or of premature decay; here we witness not only the suffering from illness or early incapacity, but, in addition, anxiety on behalf of a family deprived of their means of support. Twelve of these twenty-seven ministers were old before their time, and five of them died under the care of our society. Three applied for temporary relief only, and by means of the aid they received the lives of two were prolonged for a short period, whilst the third was restored to active usefulness for a few years longer. Four of

this group of twenty-seven ministers are still receiving our help. Nine of these sufferers from the accidents of life were under fifty years of age.

If now we inquire into the position in which these twenty-seven ministers found themselves when thus cut off, temporarily or permanently, from their former means of supporting themselves and their families, we meet with the sad truth that out of twenty-five of the twenty-seven, ten had nothing to look to save what they might obtain from external sources, and four others were not in possession of a higher income than £25. Four of the twenty-five were more fortunate, enjoying an income between £40 and £58. Two only possessed an income above £100. Among this group there is the case of a minister without any income, having a wife and eight children ; another in the same position with a wife and five children ; a third having a wife and five children, and means represented by an income of £25. In the case of another minister, the wife, hereafter to become a widow, wrote of herself as possessing, from a temporary source only, £73, with which to nurse a sick husband through a long and trying illness, and to feed and educate five children. This lady, writing to the directors, described herself as sitting with her paper on her knees, watching by the sick bed ; compelled to give up her school, with which she had endeavoured to supplement her husband's insufficient income ; and this had happened after twenty years of hard struggle on the part of her husband, who, with his small stipend, had taken charge of four congregations. Let me mention one other of these painful cases, that of a young man twenty-six years of age, who had fallen seriously ill, having served four congregations, travelling, on an average, twenty miles on a Sunday, and conducting a school during the week.

We have helped in maintaining thirty-three widows, of whom thirteen succeeded their husbands as regular recipients of benefit. The position in which many of the widows of our ministers are left is painfully illustrated by this list. Here we find eight widows without any means of support, who had in one case eight children, four or five children in three other cases, one, two, and three children respectively in three others. Three widows were left with an income of £12. or £15., happy that there was but a single child among them ; whilst each of five others inherited £25. per annum with three, five, and seven children to support in the case of three of the five. One widow with two children possessed £100.

per annum, whilst six were in receipt of an income between £60. and £70. with twelve children among them. It is obvious, at a glance, that as widows are not likely to succeed to the care of the Society through any cause affecting their lives, and as they consequently remain in need of help in many instances for a lengthened period, their charge must involve a heavy demand upon our resources. In point of fact thirteen of our widows did not exceed the age of fifty years when taken upon the books, seven only exceeded the age of seventy. At the present time we are still assisting one lady who has been in receipt of benefit for twenty-eight years; two who have been receiving benefit for twenty and twenty-one years; three for eighteen or nineteen years, and one for sixteen years. Yet, most certainly, there are none of our grants which are productive of more gratifying results than those made in favour of widows. Independently of the comfort thus afforded to ladies who have been left alone in the world during the decline of life, the directors receive letters from mothers left to depend on themselves alone for maintaining a young family, and for affording them such an education as will enable them in the future to maintain a respectable position in the world. Such has been the history of several who have set themselves nobly to meet the unequal struggle, and have maintained it successfully; a struggle which our directors have watched with the deepest interest. I believe I am not guilty of indelicacy if I read an extract from one such letter; no language can testify more powerfully to the nobleness of the exertions put forth on these occasions than the simple statement here made. The letter was received from a lady who, having nursed her husband through a lingering illness, found herself at his death without income, and with a family of eight children. She writes, when acknowledging one of our grants:—"With the school I am enabled to give the five younger children excellent educational advantages; the three girls under fifteen obtained among them seven certificates last year from the Trinity College of Preceptors, and Trinity College pianoforte playing and theory of music examinations. The eldest girl came out in the first division, and took first-class honours in the Trinity College examination. The three are steadily working now for the Second College of Preceptors, Cambridge; junior Trinity College honours, Royal Academy of Music, and South Kensington (drawing). So, also, is the boy of twelve. I name this that

friends who have kindly assisted me should know that their kindness is not thrown away." Which, I may ask, has the most reason for feeling grateful, this lady who has received our help, or the society which has been able to help her in her courageous striving? And is there not apparent in this genuine letter another element of good in our society—viz., the sympathy which it quickens between ministers and those to whom they minister?

Such has been the work of our society. The grants have not been large, but they have been substantial, rising far above a mere offering of sympathy. Generally they have varied between £40. and £50. annually; in a few instances they have reached £60.; in some other cases they have fallen to £30., £15., or to a still smaller sum. It is, however, due to three generous friends, Mr. Hopgood, the late Mr. Samuel Sharpe, and since his death, Miss Sharpe, and the late Mr. Timothy Kenrick, to add that, for many years, a bonus has been added to a large proportion of the grants from a special donation of £100. given by each of them for early distribution from year to year. This bonus the directors are now compelled to employ in maintaining the regular grants.

Now, the question I am here to ask is, Are we to continue our work in the future as in the past? To do this we must have additional means. It is not my duty to present a balance sheet; for my present purpose the single statement I have to make is, that the whole of our income for the present year is appropriated; we have at present thirty-six annual grants for which to provide; we can only meet any fresh application either by refusal, or by subtracting from the grants already apportioned.

It is chiefly for the purpose of making this statement that I now appear before you. I have no time to do more than to state my case; but descending from my position as a representative, I should like to say one word on my own account. I hope I may say it without offence; I am sure that I mean none. I would venture, then, to say that I have been disappointed at the small amount of help we have received from our ministers. They have in their hands an important means of greatly advancing the interests of the society by collections in their churches; I do not refer solely or even chiefly to the money on the plate, but to the interest which it would be in their power to excite among their congregations in favour of the society. I would remind them that we have no other public opportunity

of extending a knowledge of our society, or of explaining its objects. I am aware of a feeling of delicacy entertained by many ; into such feeling I cannot presume to intrude. Standing as I do outside the circle, and therefore not subject to impressions which might influence my opinion, it seems to me that no selfish or personal aim is involved in advocating the claims of the Christian ministry in the most direct terms. It is the interest of religion, and not of any individual, that rises in my mind in this connection, and I regard with respect the outspoken words of St. Paul to his Corinthian converts, "If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter that we shall reap your carnal things ?"

There are no churches in which the function of an educated ministry is more powerful for good than those which are represented in this room. Our late friend, Mr. Gordon, in his lectures on Christian Developments, observed that Unitarianism, and, I may add, the churches associated with it, naturally stands between Orthodoxy and the rejection of any form of religious belief. "It reconciles Christianity to those who would not, and could not, accept a reconciliation on the terms of an Orthodox belief." Our clergy, with their wider culture and more liberal associations, are peculiarly fitted to aid those who have been brought up in doctrines which their mature reason prevents their accepting ; it is largely in their power to prevent such persons from supposing that a religious belief is necessarily identified with Orthodox doctrines, and to save them, whilst rejecting such doctrines, from placing themselves altogether out of the pale of religious associations.

I should not do justice to my own feelings, nor, I think, to the feelings of my audience, were I to conclude a paper on the Ministers' Benevolent Society without noticing the loss which that society, and religious society in general, has recently sustained in the death of Mr. Timothy Kenrick. Mr. Kenrick was one of the most earnest and efficient friends of the society from the first. He occupied the chair at the meeting in Essex-street Chapel, when the proposal for the formation of the society was first made public, after the death of Mr. Russell, by his brother, the late Mr. Frederick Russell, at an annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association ; he accepted the office of treasurer when the society was established, and he held that office for thirty years, resigning it only when failing health compelled him to retire from public business. Shortly

before his death Mr. Kenrick remarked, that no work in which he had been engaged afforded him greater satisfaction than that in behalf of the Ministers' Benevolent Society. The directors have expressed to his family their conviction that, by his active interest and his generous support, he contributed very largely to the success of the society ; whilst they are sure that every recipient of benefit will bear earnest testimony to his benevolent sympathy with them in their difficulties. Had his health and life been spared, Mr. Kenrick would have been one of those most interested in the proceedings of this Conference.

Mr. J. ARTHUR KENRICK said :—Ladies and Gentlemen,—I must introduce myself to you as a sort of ogre ; that is to say, I am the treasurer of the Ministers' Benevolent Society, and I am quite willing and ready to swallow up coins, notes, cheques, silver, gold, copper, legacies, donations, annual subscriptions—whatever you will. I assure you that for all pabulum of that description I have a never-satisfied appetite ; and when I tell you that in 1881, three years ago, when I took the office of treasurer, we had only 29 recipients on our list, and that last year we made grants to 41, you will imagine that the call upon our funds requires a considerable increase to enable us to give the proper amount of aid which we think should be granted in each case. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I hardly know what words to use, so as to excite your sympathy as it ought to be excited ; whether I should appeal to you for help on account of the aged minister, who is infirm, and suffers many pains from disease and over-work, and to whose last days we can give some little alleviation ; or whether I should speak to you of the widow who makes so brave a fight for her family. I assure you that some of the most touching and pathetic letters I have ever read have been received from women who are making this struggle. It is astonishing to me how a woman will fight for her family ; and what sacrifices she does not hesitate to make for her children. On one occasion, as officer of this Society, after sending a donation to a lady, I received a letter from her, in which she said that it came at a most opportune moment ; for that she had to do her Saturday marketings, and had only 3s. 4d. in the house to do them with. I don't mean to say that this lady had no other means ; but she had no other means at that particular moment, and the assistance which the Ministers' Benevolent Society granted her at that time was, of course, an immense relief to her. And, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is not only the material assistance which we give, but I think it is the sense that we put away from them the feeling of isolation—the sense that they are utterly neglected and deserted ; and when people are suffering from the sense of isolation, it is almost impossible for them to prevent being cowed, and breaking down under their difficulties. Now, Sir, in that admirable paper which Mr. Street read, he quoted the words of Swedenborg : “ All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.” I do not

know how more good could be done, by any other means, than may be done by this Society. I appeal to you with the greatest confidence, because I am sure that everyone present is at heart with us, to help and assist these people, who, either from old age or widowhood, are making so gallant a fight to meet the difficulties with which they are surrounded. I do this with the greater confidence, because, since I began to speak, I have been told of a promised donation of fifty pounds,—and since this of fifty pounds more,—and now another gentleman has promised me twenty-five pounds. I can only say that I hope many others will follow their example.

Dr. CROSSKEY then proposed: "That this National Conference of the members and friends of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other non-subscribing or kindred congregations, be convened triennially." I regard, Sir, the foundation of these Conferences as constituting an epoch in the history of the Unitarian and Free Churches of this country. We represent a group of churches essentially distinct from those belonging to any existing ecclesiastical organisation, but we have no sufficient opportunities of associating together as members of one body, as intimately as is necessary alike for our spiritual welfare and our general usefulness. Among the churches of great Britain, I say, we constitute a group distinctly and definitely marked off from any other. In other churches, communion either directly depends upon subscription to some definite creed; or is limited by a dogmatic Trust-deed. Our churches, however, are not bound together by any authoritatively imposed dogmatic regulations, but depend upon the natural sympathies of worshipful souls, uniting themselves together for the worship of God and the service of their fellow-men. All these churches, holding the great principle that God's truth may be trusted, and that Christianity is a divine life rather than a collection of theological opinions, seek to bind themselves together in this great Conference. It does not mean, in any way, that this is a Conference in which there shall be no expression of personal opinion. As a Unitarian myself, acknowledging and rejoicing in the name, I should feel my liberty entirely destroyed if I could not openly avow my own personal belief; just as I should if I were a professor of natural history at a college, and was forbidden to say I was a disciple of Darwin, and believed in evolution. We ought to unite the frankest expression of personal opinion with the highest reverence for the convictions of others. Liberty itself would be destroyed if the clear utterance of personal conviction is to be limited, while personal conviction itself becomes worthless when it is under restraining bonds. While this is not a Conference of Unitarian Churches, but of various Free Churches, those who come must expect to hear heretical sentiments, and to meet Unitarians who call themselves what they are. This is not a Conference for those who are afraid of Unitarian or any other heresies. Those who come here must expect heresies. It is as good for their souls to hear them as it may be for ours to hear them rebuked.

The results of these Conferences justify their continuance. One of the most remarkable of these results has been that we have found that the moment

we unite together, apart from simply theological grounds, our religious sympathies rise into fuller play. If there is one thing which has characterised this Conference, it has been the devout aspirations and religious sympathies that have been drawn forth. We are proving more and more that free thought is not a discouragement, but an encouragement, to the divinest life of the soul; that those who are, perhaps, the most critically intellectual, are not, therefore, without hearts to feel and souls to worship; that we need not be false to our belief in God, because we have not refused to use our intellects upon the highest subjects on which they can be exerted; that we may have loving hearts, devoted to the noblest service of God and humanity, and yet cherish no ignominious scorn of what is true in religion, any more than in science; that a rational pursuit of truth may be united with the deepest religious sympathies. In proposing that this Conference be held triennially, I believe I am submitting a resolution, which, if adopted, will bring forth large fruits in the future. By these Conferences our group of churches will be bound together as one body, animated by one spirit, and deeper Christian sympathies will spring from our closer union. I hope, also, such Conferences as this will deliver us from that petty self-criticism, from that cant of fault-finding with ourselves and everybody else, from that feeble folly of despairing of the future of the churches in which we assemble to worship the Eternal God, because two or three people we should like to meet do not come, which seems to me a distrust of the God we adore, and a betrayal of the cause we serve.

Mr. MATHERS, of Leeds, in seconding the resolution, said:—After the speech you have heard from Dr. Crosskey, two or three words from me will be sufficient. I think that the large numbers which assembled at the Liverpool Conference three years ago, and the large numbers which have attended this meeting, have proved, not only the want, but the necessity of a Conference of this description; and when I call the attention of the friends who have been here this year, to the papers and the speeches that have been given, it shows how interesting, and instructive, and helpful these gatherings can be made. I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. E. CLEPHAN, of Leicester, then proposed a resolution appointing the following gentlemen a Committee for the management of the next Conference, as follows:—

D. AINSWORTH, Esq., M.P.

Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.

Rev. H. E. DOWSON, B.A.

Rev. P. W. CLAYDEN

Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS

C. H. JAMES, Esq., M.P.

JOSEPH LUPTON, Esq.

HERBERT NEW, Esq.

Treasurer:

T. CHATFIELD CLARKE, Esq., London.

Honorary Secretaries:

H. W. CROSSKEY, LL.D., Birmingham.

HARRY RAWSON, Eccles, Manchester.

S. A. STEINTHAL, Manchester.

A. W. WORTHINGTON, Old Swinford, Stourbridge.

This was seconded by the Rev. D. D. JEREMY, M.A., of Dublin, and carried unanimously.

Mr. D. AINSWORTH, M.P., in proposing the next resolution, said :—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I feel highly honoured at having to propose this resolution to you, and I trust you will all receive it as gladly as I did when it was proposed to me. The resolution is this :—“That the best thanks of the Conference be given to the Chairman, Mr. Councillor Johnson ; the Treasurer, Mr. Richard Peyton ; the Secretary, Mr. T. H. Russell, and the other members of the Local Committee at Birmingham, for their zealous and hospitable labours, by which they have secured the distinguished success of the Conference ; and also to the Liberal Club and other institutions in Birmingham, which have opened their premises to the members of the Conference.” The only thing, Sir, that I regret with regard to this resolution is, that it was not placed in more able hands than mine ; but I give way to nobody in the warmth of my feelings towards this Committee, and all those friends who have received us here. They have provided us with handsome rooms in which to meet, and attended to our wants in every way. They have given us a public hospitable reception, and I know they have given to us hospitable receptions in many private houses. The accommodation for our meetings could in no way have been better, and I only hope that if we hold our next meeting in London, we may have as fine a hall as this in which to make our friends comfortable. I will not detain you longer. It has been pleasant and good for us to come here, and to find everything ready to our hands ; but we must never forget the numerous petty annoyances, the trouble and anxiety to which our friends must have been put, before they could give us this warm reception. I beg most heartily to propose the resolution.

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON, of Stourbridge, in seconding the resolution, said :—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have been quite content to be a silent spectator of the proceedings hitherto, for having assisted in drawing up the programme of the Conference, my own thoughts and feelings have been adequately expressed by other speakers. But I could not refrain from asking permission to second this resolution, because nobody so well as myself knows what it really means. I do not think we can over-estimate the courtesy and forbearance with which, in the first instance, the Conference was invited to Birmingham, for our friends connected with the Old Meeting were extremely anxious to receive us in their new church,—a splendid building which is now in course of erection, and nearly finished, and which I would recommend any of you who have not done so to go and see before you leave Birmingham. It was their desire to defer the Conference till next year, in order to place that magnificent building at our disposal ; and now they have, by their own arrangement, given us, instead, this splendid hall to meet in. I think, therefore, that they have welcomed us in the most graceful and courteous manner, and that our hearty thanks are due to them. Then, also, we have to thank the Committee of the Church of the Messiah for the use of the handsome building which has so admirably fulfilled the purpose for which it was set apart, and in which our meetings have been

so satisfactorily held. We are indebted, also, to the Committee of the Church of the Saviour, for placing that church, associated as it is with the name of a man whom we all respect so greatly, at our disposal ; and I believe if we had needed additional accommodation for other meetings, there are other churches we could have met in. And not only have these places been at our service for our accommodation, but I am very glad to thank the Liberal Club, and some other institutions of the town, for having opened their doors for the benefit of our members. Now, these arrangements could not have been carried out, unless there had been, as chairman of the Local Committee, a man of wonderful tact, in keeping together and assisting the several departments which he had to superintend ; for I understand there has been a great number of different committees, and all have worked so heartily and effectively, that the Conference Committee has been relieved of all trouble and anxiety as to the local arrangements, which are unanimously acknowledged to be successful and complete. This has resulted from the energy of a man who has been working for some time past fourteen or sixteen hours a day—our friend, Mr. T. H. Russell. Now, in his interest, or rather on behalf of future secretaries of Conferences, let me urge on every minister or delegate who receives tickets to acknowledge the receipt of them ; and when he is asked if he would like to have hospitality, to send a reply ; and when he has accepted hospitality, and has had his bed and board paid for, to come and claim it. I think little difficulties arising from omissions in such matters—and there have been many such difficulties with which our secretary on this occasion has had to contend—ought to be avoided. I trust, therefore, that this vote of thanks, which we are personally and by show of hands about to give, will be taken by Mr. Councillor Johnson, by Mr. Russell, and by the other members of the Local Committee, as the individual and hearty expression of our gratitude to them for what they have done for us. I am sure they deserve it most thoroughly.

The CHAIRMAN, in putting the resolution to the meeting, said that that was an occasion which would long remain in their memories. He trusted that all present would express their approval of the resolution in the heartiest manner.

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Mr. COUNCILLOR JOHNSON, in acknowledging the resolution, said :—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—After the very kind and flattering explanation which Mr. Worthington has given of this resolution, I think I “understand” it. Speaking for myself, I may say that I have had more honour than trouble in this matter. I believe I was selected to be the Chairman of the Local Committee, because I represent what is not, technically speaking, a Unitarian Church, but the Church of the Saviour, founded by the late Mr. George Dawson, which was established as a non-subscribing church. In my appointment, this Conference is shown to be not a Conference of Unitarians only, but a Conference of the representatives of *all* Free Churches. Now, the bulk of the work has fallen on our very excellent Honorary Secretary of the Local Committee, and the Hon. Secretaries of the various Sub-Committees, who have made the arrangements which I am glad to find have satisfied you all so well.

But, as Mr. Worthington has said, and on behalf of the other officer of the General Committee, namely, your Treasurer, Mr. Peyton,—I am sure I am expressing his opinion as well as my own,—the greatest credit of making these arrangements is due to your excellent Honorary Secretary, Mr. T. H. Russell. The forethought, zeal, and industry of Mr. Russell, during the time of the preparations for this Conference, deserve all praise. On behalf of the officers of the Local Committee, I thank you heartily for the resolution you have just passed.

Mr. T. H. RUSSELL, who also replied, said :—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am sure, on my own account, and on behalf of the Executive Committee, I give you most hearty thanks for the very generous way in which you have received what has been said of our work. I am particularly glad, Sir, to have an opportunity of acknowledging publicly my own gratitude to the gentlemen with whom I have had not only the pleasure, but the honour of working ; and if you will bear with me for a minute or two, I should like to add just a few words, rather more in detail. First of all, with reference to our Chairman, who has already addressed you. We, in Birmingham, all know that Mr. Johnson is a busy man ; but he has not hesitated to give up any time asked of him in this work. He has always received me (and I have had to trouble him not a little) not only with the greatest courtesy, but with the greatest possible kindness and sympathy. What few difficulties we have had—and they have been but few—he has steered us through most admirably, and we owe more than I can express to his zeal and care. Then, as to our Treasurer, we have had in Mr. Richard Peyton a gentleman in whom we could all have the greatest possible confidence. But he stands in rather a different position from that occupied by Mr. Johnson and myself ; for while our work is now drawing to a conclusion, Mr. Peyton's is just going to begin. But we all know that his part will be carried through as well as it possibly can be, and that the vote of thanks which has been passed to-day will be thoroughly deserved by him. Then, I will say a few words about the Executive Committee itself. In my short experience of committees, I never served on one where so much encouragement and help have been given. Sometimes, when the pressure of the work has been heavy, I have been almost tempted to believe that the 14th, 15th, and 16th of April came after the 31st of December ; but when this feeling has come across me, I found that the best antidote has been the remembrance of a committee-meeting not far ahead. Next, Sir, must be mentioned our Secretaries of Special Committees ; and I feel that I cannot express my thanks to them sufficiently heartily for all that they have done. We have had in them to do with gentlemen who, when they had undertaken anything, one might be perfectly sure that it would be done, and done well. This has been the greatest possible relief to me, for when these gentlemen have said, "Such a thing has been attended to," I knew that I had no further need to think about it. There is one other acknowledgment that I have to make, namely, the thanks that I owe to my private assistant-secretary—for I fortunately have had a resident secretary to aid me—a secretary in my own small family circle. To put the matter in a few words, I don't

know what I should have done without the help of my wife. And, lastly, one word as to my own work, which has, I am sure, been far too highly spoken of. It has been hard work, no doubt, harder than I, fortunately, ever anticipated, for I might have thought twice before accepting the office I hold, had I known beforehand how much it would involve ; but I can honestly say that I have never once, for a single moment, thought, "I wish I had not undertaken the task." The work has brought me into connection with gentlemen whom I had not known before, and has helped me to know others all the better ; and I firmly believe that it has been the beginning of many life-long friendships. I am more than ever convinced that this Conference has done much good, and will do more good still ; and I beg to thank you again, most sincerely, for myself and for my colleagues, for the vote of thanks which you have just passed.

Mr. LONG, of Warrington, in moving the next resolution, said :—Ladies and Gentlemen,—The resolution which I have to propose is the last and closing one. We have had very large and, I hope, profitable meetings here in Birmingham. Now, as every ship requires a commander, so every great meeting of this kind requires a commander. In our case we have had three commanders. I believe you will all agree with me that they have conducted the business of our meetings in a very efficient manner, and have behaved courteously to everybody. Therefore, without trespassing further upon your time, I will ask you to join me in expressing our grateful appreciation of their services. I am sure we have felt great satisfaction in being present at these great meetings ; and, now that we are about to separate, let us remember the words of Mr. Rathbone, who, when speaking at Liverpool, said, "having felt that we have got good, let us go forth to do good to others." One of the ways in which we can help, is to become subscribers to one or more of those funds which have been spoken of to-day. I have much pleasure in proposing a very cordial vote of thanks to the Chairmen of the meetings, Mr. David Ainsworth, M.P., Mr. C. H. James, M.P., and, though last, not least, Mr. Joseph Lupton.

Mr. E. C. HARDING, of Manchester, said :—I will not apologise for merely seconding the resolution without any remarks of my own, from this feeling : that every possible subject seems to have been exhausted by this Conference. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I will only say that I most heartily second this resolution.

The resolution was then carried unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN, in acknowledging the vote of thanks, said :—I thank you very cordially for the manner in which you have listened to the various papers and addresses which have been given during the day. I must apologise to those who, this morning, were to have spoken on one of the papers we had, but I saw that we might have been detained far beyond the allotted time. I thank you sincerely, on behalf of Mr. Ainsworth, Mr. James, and myself, for the vote of thanks you have just passed. I hope we may be spared to see a similar Conference in the year 1888.

The Rev. JOSEPH WOOD, minister of the Old Meeting, closed the Conference with Prayer and Benediction.

EVENING SERVICES.

The Conference Committee having offered to assist Congregations in Birmingham and the neighbourhood in arranging for Special Services or Meetings on the Evening of Thursday, 16th April, and to invite, for that purpose, the co-operation of visitors at the Conference, various arrangements were made at several towns; and the following brief notices of the proceedings will form an interesting conclusion to the Report of the Conference :—

COSELEY.

At a meeting held in the Old Meeting House, Coseley, the Minister, the Rev. H. Eachus, presided, and, after a short devotional service, delivered an address referring to the stimulating influences of the Conference, and the one religious spirit which, amid many intellectual differences, animated those who attended. The Rev. J. T. Whitehead, of Hackney, gave a detailed account of the proceedings at the Conference, and the papers which had been read. Mr. S. S. Tayler, Treasurer of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, spoke upon "Devotion," and urged the duty of looking after the lost sheep, and of sparing no pains in helping to raise their neighbours to a higher life. Votes of thanks were given to the visitors for their addresses. The choir rendered, in the course of the evening, several grand choruses from Handel, and Miss M'Kean, of Oldbury, sang "Oh, rest in the Lord." The proceedings were felt by those who were present to be not only pleasant, but profitable.

COVENTRY.

At the Great Meeting, the opportunity was taken to lay the memorial stones of a new building for the Sunday Schools, consisting of two rooms, forty feet long by twenty-two wide.

In the afternoon a short devotional service was conducted in the Chapel, by the Rev. E. T. Russell, of Birmingham, after which the first stone was laid by Mr. Edwin Clephan, of Leicester, President of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, to whom a suitably-inscribed silver trowel was presented by Mr. J. Freeman, Senior Warden of the Congregation. A second stone was laid by the Minister of the Great Meeting, the Rev. G. Heaviside, B.A. There were also present the Mayor (Mr. J. Maycock), Rev. F. Haydn Williams, of Blackpool, and others.

In the evening, a tea party and public meeting were held, at which more than 400 persons attended, when the chair was taken by Rev. G. Heaviside, and addresses

were delivered by Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A., of Liverpool ; Rev. E. Bainton, Congregational Minister, of Coventry ; Rev. J. Black, M.A., of Todmorden ; Rev. R. R. Suffield, of Reading ; Rev. A. Hood, of Bournemouth ; the Mayor of Coventry ; Messrs. E. Clephan ; T. Chatfield Clarke, of London ; Collier, Kirk, Haywood, &c.

DUDLEY.

A religious service was held in the Wolverhampton-street Chapel at Dudley. The Rev. Matthew Gibson, the Minister, conducted the devotional service, and an address was given by the Rev. James Harwood, B.A., of Nottingham. The attendance was fair, and included several Ministers who had been present at the Conference.

KIDDERMINSTER.

A service of a devotional nature was held in the New Meeting House. About 160 persons were present. After the prayers had been read by the Rev. W. Carey Walters, and the lessons by the Rev. F. W. Stanley, of Bath, impressive addresses were delivered by the Revs. H. Enfield Dowson, B.A., of Gee Cross, and J. Kirk Pike, of Moreton-in-the-Marsh. The tone of the service was throughout intensely reverent, and the words spoken were such as to deepen the religious life, and widen the Christian charity of those who were present.

THE LYE, NEAR STOURBRIDGE.

At this Chapel a crowded congregation assembled, and additional seats had to be provided. Appropriate addresses were given by the Rev. Dendy Agate, B.A., of Gorton, and Mr. Graham, of Glasgow, which were much appreciated by the people.

STOURBRIDGE.

At the Presbyterian Chapel, a fair congregation assembled. The Minister, the Rev. A. W. Timmis, opened the proceedings with a short devotional service, including the reading of a passage from the Confessions of St. Augustine. Addresses were subsequently delivered by the Rev. John Dendy, B.A., formerly Minister of the Chapel, but now settled at Newport, Isle of Wight ; and subsequently by Mr. David Martineau, of London ; the Rev. S. A. Steinthal, of Manchester ; and the Rev. Jeffery Worthington, B.A., of Taunton.

TAMWORTH.

A tea party and social meeting were held, by the arrangement of the Sunday School teachers, in the new Schoolroom connected with the Colehill Chapel. The Rev. W. Robinson, who had recently resigned the pulpit, was unanimously elected to the chair, and opened the proceedings with hymn, prayer, and short introductory address. After an anthem, "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem," sung by the choir, the Rev. John Birks, of Derby, gave an interesting and instructive address, encouraging earnestness in Church life. The choir next gave the anthem, "Ye shall dwell in the Lord," and Mr. I. M. Wade, of London, Secretary of the Sunday School Asso-

ciation, spoke in an equally encouraging manner on Sunday School teaching. He was followed by Mr. C. Roper, of the Home Missionary Board, Manchester, and the anthem, "I will lift up my eyes." Addresses were afterwards made by the Rev. Thomas Robinson, of Dover; the Rev. R. E. Birks, of Chichester, formerly Minister at Tamworth; and several teachers and members of the congregation. The service concluded with the singing of a hymn and the benediction. The meeting, which was attended by about fifty persons, including a number of students from the Home Missionary Board, who are at present supplying the pulpit, and by several strangers, was regarded as most interesting and satisfactory.

WALSALL.

At the Chapel, in Stafford-street, the Minister, the Rev. Peter Dean opened the proceedings, which were of the nature of a religious service. Mr. Edwin Ellis, of Guildford, read lessons from the Psalms, and from Thomas-à-Kempis's Imitation of Christ. The Rev. A. A. Cole, Baptist Minister, of Walsall, offered prayer, and the Revs. T. W. Freckelton, of Islington, and A. F. Barfield, a Congregationalist Minister, of Walsall, gave addresses on "Religious Life and Work." Devotional hymns were sung, including Mr. F. W. Newman's "We praise Thee in Thy power, O God." The attendance was only moderate, but the meeting was generally felt to be excellent and uplifting.

WEST BROMWICH.

A religious service was conducted in the Lodge-road Chapel, by the Minister, the Rev. John Harrison. Addresses were afterwards delivered by the Rev. J. J. Wright, of Bolton; the Rev. W. Birks, of Portsmouth; and the Rev. W. Lambelle, of Carlisle. They mainly dealt with the religious life and practical work of the Church, and were listened to with great interest by a fairly good congregation. During the service anthems were sung by the choir of the Chapel.



